

# Liberal Feminism: Emphasizing Individualism and Equal Rights in Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You*

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**Abstract**—Liberal feminism is the emerging mainstream feminism that spotlights gender inequality and women's liberation within the context of liberal democracy. The aim of the study focuses on the perspectives of liberal feminism using prominent ideas of liberal thinkers in Meena Kandasamy's award-winning novel *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife* (2017). The methodology of the study includes concepts of liberal feminism in the text, and it is substantiated and explored using the ideologies of notable liberal thinkers such as Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* and John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* and *The Subjection of Women*. The protagonist's transition from a submissive to a self-liberated persona strengthens the novel's credibility as a liberal feminist text. The paper also attempts to show that the concepts of liberal feminism very well appear in the selected text.

**Index Terms**—democracy, gender equality, revival, liberal feminism, empowerment

## I. INTRODUCTION

Feminism is an ideology that recognizes that although all men and women are technically considered equal, but are not treated equally. It primarily alleges the universal suffrage of women and the victimization of women by patriarchal dominance. The origin of liberal feminism, or otherwise called "mainstream feminism" or historically referred to as "bourgeois feminism," is grounded in the feminism of the first wave. In the context of liberal politics, first-wave feminism is connected to both the liberal women's rights movements and early socialist feminism (Krolokke and Sorensen 2005).

It claims that women are equally skilled and knowledgeable, but merely because of their gender, opportunities and recognition are withheld. The liberal feminists strived on issues like domestic violence, sexual harassment, educational and legal rights of women in their works. Its key characteristics are to foster women's self-reliance and not to tolerate anything that impedes women's development.

The liberal feminist movement dates back to the 19th century with the advent of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, recognized as the first liberal feminist treatise, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, an exceptional work that deals with the pervasive dissatisfaction of domestic stereotype among women and John Stuart Mill's *The Subjugation of Women*, in which he asserts that the subordination of women is one of the chief hindrances of not only women's growth but also to human progress. Unlike the widely prevalent misunderstanding that liberal feminism prefers to demand a higher status than men, liberal feminists want women to empower themselves and insist men regard women as their equal counterparts. The notable liberal feminist, Wollstonecraft abbreviates that "I do not wish them [women] to have power over men; but over themselves" (Wollstonecraft 1792).

The purpose of the study focuses on liberal feminism concerning the work of notable Indian writer, Meena Kandasamy. She was nominated as one among the twenty-one short fiction women authors under the age of 40 from South Asia for an anthology published by Zubaan, the country's first feminist publishing house. Her works consist of every issue that relates to liberal feminism. This study is grounded in the autobiographical fiction titled *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife* (2017), shortlisted for the Women's Fiction Prize, the UK's most prestigious award given to women writers, for the year 2018. Her specialization is that she makes her reader aware of the outbreaks of violence that happen to women both internally and externally, and makes women emancipate out of their limited cocoon. As Wollstonecraft says, "It is time to effect a revolution in female manners -- time to restore to them their lost dignity -- and make them, as a part of the human species, labour by reforming themselves to reform the

world. It is time to separate unchangeable morals from local manners” (Wollstonecraft 1792). Similarly, Meena Kandasamy abbreviates, “As long as a woman cannot speak, as long as those to whom she speaks do not listen, the violence is unending” (Kandasamy 2017). She has incorporated her own tormented wedding story, which offers the reader a true image and the intensity of abuse behind closed doors, rather than portraying mere fictional characters.

The succeeding section of the paper divides itself into four sections, namely a review of literature which gives scope to equip about different ideas and concepts of liberal feminism done by different writers in their works. The methodology then deals with the proposed theory and incorporating it into the select work of Meena Kandasamy. The fourth section discussion deals with the observations of the present study with findings in other works. The conclusion provides the findings and solutions to the taken study.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The second section of the article deals with a review of literature in which various works of different writers are analyzed in the light of liberal feminism. Accordingly, this section deals with various studies examining the concepts of notable liberal thinkers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Betty Friedan and John Stuart Mill.

### A. *The Studies Related to the Concept of Mary Wollstonecraft*

The history of liberal feminism begins with Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, a groundbreaking treatise in which Wollstonecraft discusses the suppression of women and the denial of their social ability in their time, with related issues that still resonate in the emancipation movement of women from their families and society as a whole. This can be well understood by Cora Kaplan words, “We must remember to read *A Vindication* [of the Rights of Woman] as its author has instructed us, as a discourse addressed mainly to women of the middle class. Most deeply class-bound is its emphasis on sexuality in its ideological expression, as a mental formation, as the source of woman's oppression” (Kaplan 1986).

The study of Myers eulogizes Wollstonecraft's contribution in bringing woman authority to children's literature. It is implied through the study that works of Georgian children's literature focuses on male characters as dominant figures until the eighteenth century. Myers quotes the words of Elaine Showalter, a notable feminist where she finds, “parents” still means fathers, “children” means sons, and even when documenting a decline in patriarchal authority, critics fail to connect their topic to the “increased authority of mothers”. The researcher rightly points out that, after the advent of Wollstonecraft and her strong emphasis on liberation, the role of Georgian women characters emerges to be liberal in nature, possessing strength, self-possession, family breadwinner, womanly courage, and as a powerful maternal governing power, thus breaking with the stereotypes of the literary tradition of the eighteenth century (Myers 1986; Álvarez 2018). Mayabadi, in the study, relates the view of Mary Wollstonecraft and Thomas Hardy in criticizing women for accepting oppression. In the novel, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, the mother of Tess, is portrayed as a victim who supports and acknowledges the oppression conferred upon women folk by socially designed patriarchal structure. She orders her daughter to follow the same and accepts social conventions as they are, but her daughter Tess revolutionizes her mother's blind faith and strives for equality in social relationships. Hardy portrays the characteristics of conventional women and liberated women through these characters (Mayabadi 2012). The study of Turan and Kryci shows that the primary cause of the suffering of Syrian refugee women and children during the Arab uprising was their lack of education. The study emphasizes the significance of Wollstonecraft's education of women in public and private spheres to liberate themselves (Turan and Kryci 2018). Snow's study embraces Wollstonecraft's views on women's virtues and equality of reason by comparing Rousseau's *Emile*, which defines the identity of women as chaste, gentle, dutiful wives and good mothers. He quotes Rousseau's text, “Nature herself has decreed that woman, both for herself and her children, should be at the mercy of man's judgment” which depicts the authoritarian nature of men under patriarchy (Snow 2002). The study of Fais Wahidatul Arifatin addresses the problem of gender stereotyping in Japanese culture by portraying Wollstonecraft's concept of liberal feminism in Joyce Lebra's *The Scent of Sake* through the character of Rie. In contrast to traditional practice, Rie never fails to demonstrate her desire for independence and defies the stereotype that women should not be considered superior to men (Arifatin 2019).

### B. *The Studies Related to the Concept of Betty Friedan*

Betty Friedan is a remarkable liberal thinker. *The Feminist Mystique*, her most notable writing, tackles a “problem that has no name”, a sense of women's persistent frustration with their confined gender roles. It caused women to spark their spirit to fight for gender equality vigorously. The study of Wulandari's focuses on liberal feminism within the context of *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan. Wulandari, in his work, *A Woman is No Man* primarily points out the suppression of women by the character Isra through three generations in which he identified that “Women's worth is seen through their motherhood and marriage.” As depicted in Friedan's work, the woman characters suffer endless torments in terms of gender and Arab culture that require a woman to bear a male child, to stop her education to marry at an early age and nurture her family. Despite rigid conventions, Deya appears to stand up for herself in voicing out her wish to continue her studies and creating awareness to her fellow women as a representative of a liberal feminist attitude (Wulandari 2019; Hariharasudan and Gnanamony 2017). A similar study coincides with the idea of Friedan that men and women must be allowed to exhibit both their masculine and feminine characteristics as humans. The character

of Sophie Neveu, who often guides the male protagonists, reflects this very well. The study conducted by Rini and other researchers, compares the character of Neveu in the novel *The Da Vinci Code*, in the light of liberal feminism, where she gets equal rights, opportunities and financial aids like that of men. The study discovers “Sophie Neveu as a reflection of woman equality that shows masculine qualities character in the novel plays eleven roles, i.e. strong, competitive, courageous, unyielding, full of confidence, independent, more adventurous, aggressive, assertive, smart and generally acting as leaders” (Rini et al. 2020). The study of Rotskoff focuses on the pervasiveness of women's domestic stereotypes with the idea of "watered-down Marxism" by Friedan, which discusses how women are held under domesticity because of consumer capitalism (Rotskoff 2000). The work by Lasahi emphasizes the role of labourers in Catholic and Protestant churches that are hostile to women. It focuses on three aspects, such as Catholic gender disparity, the domination of patriarchy in churches, and the role of women in the Protestant churches. In supporting women's mobility, Lasahi utilizes Friedan's notion of equal opportunity and employment in the workplace. The study assesses how women are neglected from the place of the priesthood and its particular constraint on gender roles (Lasahi 2018; Košta 2014). The study of Hariharasudan implies Friedan's concept of seeking liberation from the male-dominated world through the character of Astha and Pipeelika in Manju Kapoor's *Married Woman*. The woman characters in the story deconstruct conventional practices that impede their self-growth (Hariharasudan and Gnanamony 2017).

### C. The Studies Related to the Concept of John Stuart Mill

John Stuart Mill, a prominent liberal thinker, has reiterated the definition of individual freedom in *On Liberty* and *The Subjection of Women*, which remains one of the best reads even today. The study of Michael employs Mill's viewpoints of *The Subjection of Women* through the character of Sarah Woodruff in the novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. It abbreviates the inability of the novel to understand Sarah as a human being in her own right is mainly because of the exclusive use of dominant male views and ideologies. The author points out the notion of liberal feminism in the character of Sarah, who eventually moves beyond conventional patriarchal society and identifies herself beyond the male myths about women (Michael 1987). Likewise, Delukman, in his study, explains Mill's idea that women need to live a life of their own, shattering the constraints imposed by a society dominated by men through the concept of idea and language. He brings out the individualistic nature of Nora in Helen Garner's *Monkey Grip*, who raises a daughter as a single parent by providing time for her self-growth and her family as well. Through the concept of language, the author depicts the liberal nature of the woman publicly and openly expressing her sexual desires, which are considered taboo and confined to men to talk about this issue (Delukman 2018).

In connection with Mill's *The Subjection of Women*, Foley's study examines the text of Weldon's *Praxis* in the context of liberal feminism. Exposed to the overwhelming sense of rage and hopelessness due to her male counterpart, Praxis, the protagonist of the novel, violates her abusive husband and the stereotypical position of the woman coined by the patriarchal domain. She joins the women's movement, which eventually frees her life and inspires her fellow women to live their own lives. The central characteristics of liberal feminism can be seen in the behaviour of Praxis, such as gender equality, individual empowerment and self-actualization (Foley 2007). Mayabadi's study compares the similarities between Mill and the view of liberal feminism by Thomas Hardy in the novels *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*. The renowned writer Hardy portrays the concept of New Woman through his female characters, namely Tess and Sue, who violate gender inequality prevalent in Victorian society. Despite the strict cultural background, Tess and Sue are active characters who decide on their own in taking decisions and behave according to their laws, which represent the idea of Mill's *On Liberty*. In a society that expects women to be submissive, Tess is portrayed as a bold character who talks about the status quo and the abuses of male domination (Mayabadi 2012). Turan and Kiyici's study highlights the condition of Syrian refugee women and children during the Arab uprising in the context of liberal feminism. The study focuses on the majority of women's participation in the Arab uprising and how women were at the forefront of the protests, speaking out against their injustices. The author scrutinizes Mill's liberal feminism as an instrument to refute the male-dominant system (Turan and Kryci 2018). The study of Snow correlates David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* and Rousseau's *Emile* with Mill's liberation of personal autonomy in the book *The Subjection of Women*. Snow points to the double standards of writers, focusing in particular on male supremacy and female subordination. The outcome of the study examines that the writers believe that women and men are not equal, although they should have a varying degree if considered equal (Snow 2002). The study of Jose discusses the connecting element that leads to women's liberation through John Stuart Mill's ideas in his works. Jose reflects on Mill's views, in which he firmly opposes women's legal subordination to masculine force. The article also focuses on Mill's viewpoint, in which he asserts that the social progress of society is described by the way women are treated (Jose 2004).

It can be understood from the above-mentioned studies that many scholars have carried out their studies in different works on the idea of liberal feminism. The studies represent the ideas of liberal feminism in certain texts, but no one has carried out the concept of liberal feminism in Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife* (2017). Thus, the present study will bridge the gap between literature and attempts to dig out the concept of liberal feminism in Kandasamy's text.

## III. METHODOLOGY

Liberal feminism, with the theories of influential liberal thinkers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Betty Friedan and John Stuart Mill, is the emerging mainstream literature. This section deals with the liberal theories of feminism by the notable theorists listed above and the text of the novel *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife* (2017) by Meena Kandasamy. This section attempts to substantiate the text with the proposed concepts of liberal feminism. The methodology implies the elements of liberal feminism like male domination, suppression of women, domestic responsibility of women as wives and mothers, and finally, the liberation of women by shattering the conventional norms prescribed for women. They are as follows:

On the first hand, the prominent liberal thinker Wollstonecraft strongly deprecates the subjugation of women by parents, where they inculcate their daughters to be submissive to men right from their infancy. She states, “Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper; outward obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man; and should they be beautiful, everything else is needless, for, at least, twenty years of their lives” (Wollstonecraft 1845). Similarly, in the novel, even though the protagonist expresses her wish to end the marriage, the protagonist’s parents compel her to remain with her abusive husband. Her father on the phone pleads to stay with the husband, listing the crude mocking remarks of society against his daughter’s upbringing. Whenever the protagonist complains about her husband’s brutality, the protagonist’s parents blame her for his deeds. They warn her not to speak or raise her voice towards him, to tolerate, to give him time, be calm, and comfort her by saying that her husband does these things for her own good. The protagonist’s mother pacifies her saying, “Silence is a shield and it is also a weapon. Learn how to use it. Do not talk back. You cannot make peace unless you hold your tongue” (Kandasamy 2017). The portrayal of the parent’s behaviour in Kandasamy’s *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife* replicates Wollstonecraft’s theory.

On the other hand, Wollstonecraft argues that male physical dominance is used to enslave women, and this helps them to easily fulfil their desires. While talking about men's strength, Wollstonecraft states, “Man, from the remotest antiquity, found it convenient to exert his strength to subjugate his companion, and his invention to show that she ought to have her neck bent under its yoke; she, as well as the brute creation, was created to do his pleasure” (Wollstonecraft 1845). This is quite well expressed in the behaviour of the unnamed husband in which, in any circumstance, he uses his physical power to manipulate his wife to demonstrate his full dominance over her. The protagonist says, “It is not in knowing that I’m defeated, or in the realization that I am not physically strong enough to match him blow for blow, that I cannot teach him a lesson never to mess with me” (Kandasamy 2017). This imitates the women's enslavement embodied in Wollstonecraft's theory.

Besides, Wollstonecraft emphasizes how men treat women to uphold their commandments, which, in turn, belittle women to the status of immature children. She says, “Men, indeed, appear to me to act in a very unphilosophical manner when they try to secure the good conduct of women by attempting to keep them always in a state of childhood” (Wollstonecraft 1845). Likewise, the husband addresses the protagonist to dress in a plain unfashionable manner and to hairdo in a style that would not appeal to anyone, to walk in a certain way, to use public transport, particularly bus when going out, to be away from social networking sites, not to share her mobile number except to her parents, not to speak to outsiders, not to use Kohl as he believes it is used by seductresses and so on. He says that he does these things for her own good. When the protagonist reports the same to her parents, they too pacify her, stating that a husband only means good to his wife. The protagonist feels that she is reduced to being a child whenever she hears “Your own good”. The similarity of Wollstonecraft's view of men suppressing woman's rationale is very well expressed in the lines, “He embarked upon a thorough class analysis of me and, based upon his disappointed findings, decided to set me on the right path. Marriage became a Re-education camp. He transformed into a teacher, and I became the wife-student learning from this Communist Crusader” (Kandasamy 2017). Wollstonecraft exemplifies that the only way for women to emancipate themselves, is to “Strengthen the female mind by enlarging it, and there will be an end to blind obedience” (Wollstonecraft 1845). Alike, in order to emancipate, the protagonist takes a firm decision not to be a traitor for the persecution of her husband but battles back with him to establish his own identity for her. The protagonist’s transformation from a meek woman into a liberal human being can be juxtaposed to the liberal ideology of Wollstonecraft in the following lines, “The soul-talk where I congratulate myself on every moment that I do not have to bother about the incorrigible nature of love, its heavy baggage and bitter arguments, the needless questions of men” (Kandasamy 2017).

The remarkable liberal thinker Betty Friedan says, “Over and over again, stories in women's magazines insist that women can know fulfilment only at the moment of giving birth to a child. There is no other way she can even dream about herself, except as her children's mother, her husband's wife” (Friedan 1963). Likewise, in the novel, the protagonist's parents, as well as the husband, compel the reluctant protagonist to have a baby to solve their disputes between them. The mother of the protagonist insists on having a child so that the child alters the conduct of her husband and completes her womanhood. As Friedan states, “When she stopped conforming to the conventional picture of femininity, she finally began to enjoy being a woman” (Friedan 1963). In the novel, the protagonist wishes to free herself from imprisonment under the influence of an abusive husband and does not wish to have a child. She says she does not want to bring a son into the world to see his mother abused and a daughter battered. She uses her limited freedom to flee from this condition by attempting all kinds of ways, such as eating heat-inducing mango, papaya,

pineapple that prevents the possibility of conception. The illustration of Friedan's liberal ideology can be seen in the following lines, where the protagonist says, "This is how I turn my kitchen into a combat zone, making sure that my cooking secures my and my womb's liberty" (Kandasamy 2017). Further, Friedan enunciates, "The only way for a woman, as for a man, to find herself, to know herself as a person, is by creative work of her own. There is no other way" (Friedan 1963). To hinder her career as a writer and to prohibit her from accessing the outside world, the protagonist's husband retrieves her manuscript, laptop and social networking accounts. Corresponding to Friedan's autonomous way of empowering women, the protagonist says that the writer is greater than the woman in her and continues her love of writing even though her husband torments her not to write and inhibit her intellectual freedom. She says, "The eagerness to rub salt on his wounded pride, to reclaim my space, my right to write" (Kandasamy 2017). She considers writing as a means of salvation and an act of mutiny. Therefore, Friedan's concept of liberalism is matched with the action of the protagonist.

John Stuart Mill, a prominent liberal thinker, believed both genders should have equal rights under the law. He states, "All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite to that of men; not self-will, and government by self-control, but submission, and yielding to the control of others" (Mill 1869). Mill explains how society perceives that women have to live for others and make a complete submission of themselves in order not to have any self-interest. Equating to this, the protagonist suppresses her desire to save her relationship despite her ambition to write, because her husband does not want her to be a writer. The protagonist does things to please her husband as if it were a declaration of chastity to not ask him for anything but to prevent conflict so that she could preserve the honour of her family. She says, "The effect of adhering to my husband's wishes gives me the appearance of a woman who has given up. But, I know that attired in this manner, I am all set to play the part of the good housewife" (Kandasamy 2017). In addressing the hardships of oppression, Mill explicates that "wives are in general no better treated than slaves; but no slave is a slave to the same lengths, and in so full a sense of the word, as a wife is" (Mill 1869). Corresponding to this, the protagonist welcomes her husband back from the office with a grand feast of his favourite foods, reporting the domestic chores of a dutiful wife, such as ironing his clothing, keeping the kitchen tidy, scrubbing the toilet, and complete cleaning of the home. She says, "To consult a man is to make him feel like a king and to report to him is to make him feel like a god" (Kandasamy 2017), and she continues enumerating her list with a note of necessary humbleness before a look of accomplishment flashes across his face.

Mill insists that women stand up for themselves individually and states that, "The only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs or impede their efforts to obtain it" (Mill 1869). Despite the constraints of her husband and parents, the protagonist in the novel decides to lead her life as per her wish, unmindful of the perceived social norms of society, steps out of her restricted space to emerge as an independent woman aspiring to fulfil her dreams. She says, "A Woman being abused can mostly trust only one person for help. Herself" (Kandasamy 2017). The protagonist represents Mill's ideal icon of liberalism, addressing women to take charge of themselves and their lives. Mill also insists women stand up for themselves and violate their submission to men. He says, "We have had the morality of submission, and the morality of chivalry and generosity; the time is now come for the morality of justice" (Mill 1869). Corresponding to the theory of Mill, the protagonist revolt back against her husband and also endorses her fellow women to take a stand on their own to live a liberated life. She says, "I am the woman with wings, the woman who can fly and fuck at will. I have smuggled this woman out of the oppressive landscape of small-town India. I need to smuggle her out of her history, out of the do's and don'ts for good Indian Girls" (Kandasamy 2017). The notion of liberal feminism is very well articulated through the discourse of the protagonist.

The above explanations render that the liberal feminism concepts are substantiated through liberal ideologies in Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife*. All the ideas outlined have a linkage to the ideals framed by prominent liberal thinkers. The outcome of this session is that the researchers discuss the traceable contexts of liberal ideas in the chosen text. The subsequent section discussion is a culmination of contrasting and comparing the ideologies of liberal feminism in the works of Meena Kandasamy with other studies.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

Some studies concentrate on liberal feminism in literature. In this section, those studies are correlated and evaluated with Meena Kandasamy's text, *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife* in the perspectives of liberal feminism.

Many works depict the aspects of liberal feminism through their protagonists. For instance, Yasnur Asri's study focuses on the suppression of women in Indonesian culture through the major protagonists, namely Mariamin in *Azab dan Sengsara* and Anisha in the novel *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*. It reflects the role of women in the private space of doing domestic chores and perfecting the roles of wife and mother, while men are positioned in the public space with power. It focuses on the progressive notion of women protagonists who resist the patriarchal tradition that has silenced them for centuries (Asri 2017). Similarly, in *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife*, the protagonist's husband forces her to be under the closed sphere doing household chores and taking care of the home without letting her experience the outer world. To free herself from her husband's clutches, the protagonist flees away from the home, thereby establishing her own identity.

The study of Suaidi et al. depicts liberal feminism seen in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* through the character of Elizabeth. She is depicted as a woman with choices who, regardless of the constraints imposed by her parents to marry Mr. Collins, chooses her own life (Suaidi et al. 2016). In contrast to this, the protagonist exits her married life with an abusive husband amid constant urges her parents to adhere to her husband. The study of Nur Azizah and Nurul Fitri illustrates liberal feminism through the character of Katharine Graham in the movie titled *The Post*. This film depicts Katherine's behaviour against society's stereotype and underestimation of women as being fit only for private life and not as successful leaders outside their private sphere. She proves that she has the same freedom as her husband and embraces her own goals (Azizah and Fitri 2019). Likewise, despite her husband's constraint, the protagonist continues to pursue her passion for writing and stands on her own.

The study of Yasinta Deka Widiatmi analyzes liberal feminism through the character of Jane Eyre in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. She challenges the male-dominated world to give equal respect and opportunities as men (Widiatmi 2013). Accordingly, in the select novel, the protagonist rejects the domination of her husband and proves that she can be a successful woman without him. The study of Carole Jones discusses the empowerment and self-realization of female protagonists in Laura Hird's *Born Free* and Jenni Fagan's *The Panopticon*. It analyzes the characters of Joni and Anais who fights for their equality in sexual liberation and transcend the trauma prompted by the patriarchal society (Jones 2015). Similarly, the protagonist in the novel chooses to flee from sexual abuse to succeed in achieving her sexual liberation. The study of Indrani Mitra and Madhu Mitra highlights the work titled *Stanadayini*, in which the authors discuss the development of women from being daughters-in-law in feudal male chauvinistic households to being the equal counterpart of her home. The study also reflects the women characters transforming themselves from reproductive roles to the productive sphere of the economy (Indrani Mitra and Madhu Mitra 2015). Compared to this, the protagonist violates the reproductive constraints imposed by her family and emerges to be an independent woman in pursuing her dreams.

To summarize, the concepts and elements of liberal feminism are evaluated and scrutinized with other different studies. It shows that the notion of liberal feminism is represented immensely in the text of Meena Kandasamy through the protagonist's incidents, happenings and discourses. The idea of liberal feminism is represented in various genres but is confined in the Indian literary scenario. The present discourse compares not only the studies of other researchers but also is compared with novels and movies of different languages in the perspective of liberal feminism in Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife*. All the studies reveal women's fictional characters, while the focal point of this study deals with the narration of the protagonist's abusive marriage and liberation in real life.

## V. CONCLUSION

The present study abbreviates liberal feminism attributes in Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife*. The text is analyzed in terms of theories and ideologies of liberal feminism proposed by eminent liberal thinkers like John Stuart Mill, Mary Wollstonecraft and Betty Friedan. Through this study, it is established that Meena Kandasamy's text affirms liberal feminism proposed in notable works such, as *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, *On Liberty*, *The Subjection of Women* and *The Feminine Mystique*. The said concepts of liberal feminism of the above-mentioned books are explored in the chosen work of Meena Kandasamy, and the findings of the study depict the concepts of liberal feminism rendered in the chosen work. The study's findings indicate that the protagonist's character embodies the essential characteristics of liberal feminism, like individuality, resistance to patriarchal domination, autonomous liberty and gender parity. The research, though discussed extensively, has some limitations. This study deals with the concept of liberal feminism in only one work of Meena Kandasamy, excluding other notable works of the writer. The limitations of the present study give scope and recommend for the auxiliary studies that the future research can be carried out in the areas of domestic violence, societal pressure, culture, tradition, domination, trauma, depression, emancipation and so on.

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