

Abstract

Feminism in Contemporary Indian English Writing: Literature as a Tool against Male Oppression in *When I Hit You* and *The Silence and the Storm*

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Feminism in contemporary Indian English literature functions as a powerful tool to expose and resist patriarchal oppression. Modern women writers use literature to articulate silenced experiences of domestic violence, marital control, and gendered injustice. Texts such as *When I Hit You* and *The Silence and the Storm* foreground women's voices that challenge male dominance within family and society. The first chapter highlights multiple types of feminist theory like postcolonial feminism in India focuses on how women experience oppression shaped by colonial history, patriarchy, class and culture. Intersectional feminism examines how multiple identities- gender, class, religion, language and sexuality- intersect to deepen women's oppression and liberal feminism in India emphasizes equal rights, education, legal reforms and individual freedom. In second chapter literature is used as a tool against male oppression Meena Kandasamy's *When I hit you* the protagonist uses writing as a "militant" tool for self-preservation using her intellect and to reclaim and identity that her abuser tried to erase through violence similarly, Kalpana Sharma's *The silence and the storm* act as a structural witness utilizing narrative to break the systemic "silence" surrounding gender-based violence thus literature acts as a powerful tool in showcasing the male dominance with the help these books.

FEMINISM IN CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ENGLISH WRITING: LITERATURE AS A
TOOL AGAINST MALE OPPRESSION IN *WHEN I HIT YOU* AND
THE SILENCE AND THE STORM



Project submitted to St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of BACHELOR OF ARTS in English Language and Literature

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project titled “Feminism in Contemporary Indian English Writing: Literature as a Tool against Male Oppression in *When I Hit You* and *The Silence and the Storm*” is the record of bona fide work done by me under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Priya K Nair, Associate Professor, Department of English.

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CERTIFICATE

I hereby declare that this project titled “Feminism in Contemporary Indian English Writing: Literature as a Tool against Male Oppression in *When I Hit You* and *The Silence and the Storm*” by Sandhra P.L is a record of bona fide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

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Introduction

Feminism in India is an important topic of discussion at present so discussing Indian English literature through feminist perspectives is very important and relevant. Mary Wollstonecraft famously defined as women having power over themselves. In the Indian context, this autonomy is contested. Feminism has taken different paths like liberal feminism, which seeks individual rights and rational agency as seen in the journalistic accounts of Kalpana Sharma's *The Silence and the Storm*; postcolonial feminism, which deconstructs the "double burden" of native patriarchy and modern hypocrisy exemplified by the abusive intellectual husband in Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You*; and intersectional feminism, which recognizes that a woman's struggle is inseparable from her caste, class, and social position. Together, these perspectives move beyond a monolithic view of womanhood, using literature as a site of resistance where the act of writing becomes the ultimate tool for reclaiming a self that has been fragmented by systemic violence and social hierarchy.

In Indian English literature, the written word has historically functioned as a double-edged sword: while it can liberate, it has often been weaponised by men as a sophisticated tool of oppression. By controlling narratives, patriarchal structures have long enforced the "sacrificial ideal," portraying the ideal Indian woman as a silent, suffering figure whose value is tied solely to her domestic utility. This literary erasure denies women what Mary Wollstonecraft famously defined as the "power over themselves," instead trapping them within a male-authored script. In a postcolonial context, this is further complicated as women are often cast as the "vessels of tradition," expected to uphold national honour while remaining subordinate to native patriarchy. Even in supposedly "progressive" circles, as seen in Meena

Kandasamy's *When I Hit You*, literature and ideology are used by the male antagonist to silence his wife, proving that intellectualism can often mask deep-seated patriarchal control.

In Indian English literature, the written word has historically functioned as a double-edged sword: while it can liberate, it has often been weaponised by men as a sophisticated tool of oppression. By controlling narratives, patriarchal structures have long enforced the "sacrificial ideal," portraying the ideal Indian woman as a silent, suffering figure whose value is tied solely to her domestic utility. This literary erasure denies women what Mary Wollstonecraft famously defined as the "power over themselves," instead trapping them within a male-authored script. In a postcolonial context, this is further complicated as women are often cast as the "vessels of tradition," expected to uphold national honour while remaining subordinate to native patriarchy.

To overcome centuries of being written into silence, women in Indian literature have turned the act of storytelling into their most radical form of survival. They achieve Mary Wollstonecraft's vision of "power over themselves" by refusing to be mere characters in a male-authored script, instead using the pen to document the raw, uncomfortable truths of their lives. In Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You*, the protagonist survives a soul-crushing marriage by secretly writing her way out of it, proving that even when a body is trapped, a woman's liberal and postcolonial agency remains through her voice.

Similarly, the women in Kalpana Sharma's *The Silence and the Storm* shatter the intersectional barriers of caste and poverty by simply refusing to stay quiet about the violence they endure. By speaking out, these women transform their private trauma into a public political statement, showing that the ultimate way to defeat oppression is to reclaim the right to say "I

exist" on one's own terms. Feminist literature in India serves as a powerful "counter-history," dismantling a long-standing male dominance that has historically used the written word to cage women within domestic archetypes. For centuries, the "male gaze" in Indian writing reduced women to two-dimensional figures: either the self-sacrificing Sita-like devotee or the dangerous seductress. This literary tradition was a tool of control, ensuring women remained "objects" of a story rather than its "authors." However, modern feminist writers have reclaimed the narrative, transforming literature into a space where women finally exert what Mary Wollstonecraft called "power over themselves." By documenting the raw reality of the female experience, authors like Meena Kandasamy and Kalpana Sharma strip away the romanticised masks of "tradition" to reveal the systemic violence hidden beneath.

Tracing this history reveals how dominance evolved from overt religious mandates to sophisticated postcolonial and intersectional silencing. In the past, male writers defined a woman's virtue by her silence; today, feminist literature exposes how even "progressive" men use intellectualism to maintain that same old control. The power of these modern texts lies in their refusal to be polite. By centering the voices of those marginalized by caste and class, feminist literature does more than just "tell a story"—it functions as a political intervention. It proves that when women speak out, they don't just challenge individual men; they challenge the entire historical structure that tried to keep them as silent footnotes in their own lives.

Chapter 1

Feminist Theory

Mary Wollstonecraft in her work *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* challenges patriarchal assumptions about women and establishes the need for women to be treated as full citizens of a country. She demanded that women be given education. Though feminist ideology emerged in the west women's voices from other parts of the world also began to be heard. Postcolonial feminism argued that western feminists often overlooked unique experiences of females in early colonial time period by failing to consider the intersection of gender with race and cultural differences. It can also be termed as globally-aware feminism that acknowledges the "double colonization" of patriarchal system and colonialism experienced by many women, promotes transnational feminist solidarity, and highlights importance of local knowledge and oral histories in understanding diverse women's lives and struggles (Bharathi and Annapoorneshwari).

Gayatri Spivak and Chandra Talpade Mohanty wrote extensively about feminism from the global south. Postcolonial feminism theory in literature is widely used as by female writers to explore the specific historical, cultural and political consequences of colonialism on the lives of women moving beyond western centric ideologies and arguing that women needed to define feminism on the basis of their own experiences. In India the works of celebrated writers like Arundhati Roy had reflected concerns regarding women's position in a stridently patriarchal society. In works like *God Of Small Things* and *The Ministry Of Utmost Happiness* she clearly throws light on the struggle of women who live in patriarchal households and more over the violence that they have to face both in the private and the public domains. Meena Kandasamy is

also a writer who tries to show case gender oppression through her works like *When I Hit You* and *The Gypsy Goddess* etc.

Post colonial feminism in India emerged as critique of western based feminism which was seen as quite irrelevant and was in a way trying to reinforce the dominator systems inherent within the structures of colonialism. Its main aim was to highlight issues which existed at that time like dowry and domestic violence along with addressing the oppression on the basis of gender class, caste and religious diversities in the post-colonial nation. This movement has challenged the merging of ‘third world females’ with western thought. It also brought a significant change in the patriarchal structures in our country which was often linked with the colonial legacy and patriarchy in its various forms like nationalism and capitalism.

Many women writers used the ideas of postcolonial feminism with the back clash against its ideals and questioned the Western - centric feminism which was criticised for its tendency to universalize the idea of women. They stated that this monolithic notion of feminism failed to account for cultural specification and forced women of the global south to identify with ideas that were not relevant for them.

Intersectional feminism mainly refers to the realization of how injustice blends the past as well as the present. The violence of racism and discrimination since ages have shaped people’s mind set and lives. Their access to education, work, and safety is largely dependent on their gender, class and caste. The term inter-sectional feminism was first coined by Kimberle Crenshaw who was an American civil rights advocate and a legal scholar. In her article named “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics” she writes extensively

about this. We also have celebrated female writers who tried to show how intersectionality can be used to address the problems women face in society through their works like the *Beast Stories* by Mahasweta Devi, *My Story* by Kamala Das and *Gendering Cast* by Uma Chakravorti and all these are seen as perfect examples of what exactly is happening in our contemporary society. It has also impacted on various stages of a woman like motherhood, mental health and last but not least gender based abuse which is still causing chaos in households.

It is seen that motherhood is not an individual experience and it is seen as a complex identity shaped by the intersecting social cultural dynamics. Intersectional feminist critics state that main stream feminism has overlooked a whole set of challenges and norms that condition women. Such feminists challenge the concept of “ideal mom” by revealing the barriers and the oppressive social system. This approach shows us that the structural barriers and socio cultural barriers have a huge impact on mothers who are from marginalised sectors which leads to a deep understanding realities of our society.

In contemporary India female mental health is greatly impacted by overarching factors like gender, caste and value in society. All this leads to a higher risk for mental health in women, the key issues are the burden of giving care, limited access to resources like caregiving, limited access to academics, occupation etc along with the tendency of patriarchal structures which reinforce stigma and discrimination. In order to solve all these issues what is required is community oriented care like self- help groups, consistent policy changes and funding to end gender difference and to remove the obstacles for the mental well-being of women. The gender based abuse has now become a global issue with declining health and creating a psychological and financial impact on victims and our reading y highlights how the factors like race, disability and sexual preferences leave a lasting impact. It creates a wall that blocks justice to the

marginalized group, creating a need for a comprehensive approach that centers the experience of individuals who have faced it and are affected the most, more over the theory just helps to understand how different types of discrimination like cast, race as told before and most importantly classism which is often collide and compound there are a couple of books which describes about the abuse which the women writers have written and which throws light on the violated action which woman have to go through like the book by Kalpana Sharma *The Silence and the storm: Narratives of Violence Against woman in India* and *Chup: Breaking the Silence About India s 'Women* by Deepa Narayan.

Marginalized voices like that of Dalit women, tribal Woman, Muslim women and Rural women etc and whose experiences are often over looked by the mainstream movement by which focuses on upper class individuals. Their experiences differ depending on the socio-cultural back drop. There are many factors that marginalize them like cultural reasons, social status and economic fragility. All this influences their access to resource materials, autonomy etc Example: Females from the patriarchal family can face heavy restricted educational and employment opportunities and higher risk of gender based violence while cultural roles can affect their health and community participation.

It is also seen how the socio-cultural background creates a variation in women's experience like gender and race, how a black female is discriminated in which both racism and sexism are involved and resulting a unique issue which is not just because she is a female but also because she belongs to a specific race and social class. A woman's economical condition definitely impacts her experiences with gender based discrimination and non- availability of necessary resources, individuals with disabilities are often seen as a burden and disabled females suffer multiple marginalizations.

Liberal Feminism which can also be called as the mainstream feminism can be defined by its focus on gaining gender equality through political and legal rights which is informed by human rights. Mary Wollstonecraft in her work *The Vindication of the Rights of Women* argues that the women should also be treated like the men in society and should also have access to the education and freedom she also argued that women deserved support as they did not have access to the education and also advocated for co-education for all the women in the society, so that they can be capable to become good workers and also become companions of their spouses as both genders are equal.

Another celebrated feminist of the 20th century is Betty Friedan who in her work titled *The Feminine Mystique*, which is the prevailing ideology, shows women's selflessness to the family. She argues for their individual growth and says that women must pursue their careers and not be confined to household chores. Indian feminism advocates equality among the genders emphasizing the removal of discrimination. The effort is to include in the legal framework the provision of maternity benefits as it allows the women to be more hardworking, independent and responsible just like a man. She should also get all the rights that the men in the society have been enjoying like the right to vote, right to education to name a few. The implication that legal rights are important for women to gain their freedom. There is emphasis on legal equality.

This theory shows the equality among genders by bringing a change on the basis of the law and various policies and the key concept is that a female can achieve liberation by getting their basic rights which once was limited to the patriarchal society. After India's independence, the government granted constitutional rights and wanted to abolish discrimination based on gender and took required measures to uplift the women in the society. This also allowed the

women access to different positions in different fields and checked the harassment of women in the workplace.

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (commonly known as the POSH Act) was passed in 2013. This enabled females to get equality at the workplace. In this the women's autonomy can be seen securing equal rights, education and job opportunities within the system. This mainly focuses on areas like that of legal protection against discrimination, property rights and many other rights to guarantee the rights of each and every woman of our nation. Liberal feminism in our nation suggests to overcome these oppressions by working within the law to achieve equality in all the areas like politics, Occupation, skill development etc. It mainly focuses on increasing the freedom of a female via different kinds of reforms and changing discrimination practises completely rather than destroying the whole socio-political structure in a nut shell.

Chapter 2

Literature as a tool against male oppression

Women in India have been facing oppression for ages. This chapter looks into the way feminist literature in India has strengthened the struggle for female emancipation. One such book is *When I Hit You* by the writer Meera Kandasamy. It clearly shows the oppression along with mental and physical abuse faced by a young married woman who dared to disclose the domestic violence in public, even though it would make her situation worse. This showcases how a female is curbed under patriarchal power (Kaur and Gupta 397). She is not even allowed to pursue her interests and is isolated from her dear ones. This ruling mentality of the male of the household clearly shows that he follows the patriarchal ideology to control his wife which still exists in many households in India. There is a high percentage of abuse faced by women in the rural areas where a women's authority is not given much importance and education is denied but in this context of the story the protagonist and her professor husband represent educated middle class.

In the novel the woman's husband is "anti-imperialist" and "progressive" ; he is a Marxist intellectual but he is trying to enslave his wife. This behaviour has been going on since ages and many women had to suffer without any means of hope but in this novel she is trying to make an attempt to free herself. In order to escape from this she uses the power of language by the act of writing. She uses some powerful terms like "Stiletto knife" and a "shield" to show case her longing for a mental liberation why physically trapped in a male dominance and finally manage to escape from her marital house to her childhood home and becomes a writer and calls herself as a "warrior" not just a simple writer.

The point of intersectional feminism can be seen in this as the class and caste she bears influences every aspect of her life. In order to protect her social standing in the patriarchal order as she wanted to protect it at any cost, a sudden attempt to escape can be seen as she uses literature as a powerful tool. It also serves as a primary tool for her to express her poetic anger and also to express solidarity with other victims. This also helps them to heal from the past trauma and as the women in the novel does to raise her voice against oppression and abuse. The number of women getting abused each year is increasing as all this is done to control the women from doing what they actually want. This novel acts as a tool for liberation from the journey of a victim to embrace freedom and live on their own terms.

Thus we can say that the novel *When I Hit You* by Meera Kandasamy clearly shows that a woman can rebel and break the stereotype emerging from the so-called “cultural silence”. Data shows that 42% of women in India are allowed to go alone to places like hospitals, markets and outside their community. Which is good but still a large number of women are trapped in abusive households without permission even for going out. Expressing emotions through literature serves as a relief for them as they are unable to free themselves physically.

The Silence and the Storm by Kalpana Sherma who is a journalist and in this novel she is presenting a journal of almost three decades of working and to show how women are being violated and how she fights back. Different cases which occurred in India are showcased in her work starting from the death of a young tribal girl in 1972 Mathura custodial rape case to the murder of an eight year old in Kashmir in 2018. The narrative around violence has remained the same over the decades. In this book she tries to show how the women from all walks of life are

being violated and how they stripped off their dignity (Sharma). It shows how domestic, custodial deaths and all kinds of abuses are suffered by females in our country.

In these three decades the main challenges are portrayed in the journal of “silences” and “the storm” (a strong resistance against crimes) she shows the societal challenges of the law in our nation especially after 2012. It shows that the underlying practice remains the same, the book asks the person to fight rather than remain silent. This shows accounts of violence over the victim, it acts beyond the sexual assault. It showcases the impact on environmental destruction on women’s lives last but not the least that how much the system of judiciary is slow and not responding correctly it clearly highlights the adage “justice delayed is justice denied” .

Now the feminist theories are also considered as a highlight of this novel the intersectional feminism can be seen with the example of caste and the class like the Khairlanji massacre where basic rights were denied to the economically vulnerable It shows how the poor ladies face different forms of violence such as loss of livelihood due to the corruption of the politics.

Postcolonial theory shows us that systemic violence is very evident in instances of gender violence which is seen in physical assault cases in India. Liberal feminism focuses on the Legal Reforms like that of the criminal laws and the implementation of the same. Public and private relations from the plot of the journal by Kalpana Sherma. It is quite evident that the females in the Indian society are oppressed in the hands of male and are seen as subservient. The males tend to stick on to the traditional masculine roles which have a long history right from the early hunter gather society. In ancient groupings like the hunter- gatherer society the structure depended on masculine power. It was seen in all the areas like that of accumulation of private

property. The land was often controlled by the men and all this was passed down to their heirs and gradually they started controlling the women's sexuality as well. In early society the jobs were based on physical strength. So men were involved in more high-risk jobs like that of the hunting and women looked after the children and the household. This practice that was in place since ages created a culture that believes in cultural norms that the men are more powerful and are the dominant gender.

Some research also suggests that the "masculine gender role" pressurises men. So they feel more pressure to be tough and anti-feminine, so when the roles are changed it can cause stress to cope with the stereotype and which is strongly associated with aggressive attitudes towards women.

The "ideal worker" issue also leads to the attitude that the work places are often a space that houses a male dominated system and a female co-worker may not be given much importance. During the early times men were often placed in a work place in the public domain and the traditional space of a women was the kitchen and her house According to the UN social norms index it was found that almost 90% of men show unfair biases against the females a community which is directly or indirectly marginalized in the domains of education, job, politics etc. Some of the theories and terms tend to project male domination as completely natural. We can say that these stereotypes are now changing as at present the females are increasingly occupying roles that are usually performed by the men including the combat sector. They are also serving in high positions in the corporate sectors, manufacturing and skills are reversing like the stereotypes by taking up night shifts and in some cases taking up 24/7 operations in manufacturing jobs etc. Shared responsibilities are still a work in progress and men also tend to

share the chores like child care, house hold work etc more over the gen z (generation) are more inclined and gender non-conforming love than previous generation.

Recent studies show that Indian feminist literature has been seen as a “tool” against oppression. Such narratives challenge the patriarchal system and it often highlights the intersectional issues of caste, class etc. These shifting narratives show women as independent and self-reliant. Recent works address complex issues like that of the Dalit writers. Writers like Bama write extensively about Dalit experiences. Such writing creates different perspectives and gives rise to a mass social change by critiquing existing norms. Such literature transcends the norms of traditional fiction by using subaltern perspectives. The present generation uses literature to criticize male dominance They use literature as a tool to expose institutionalised oppression.

The present generation also questions traditional family dynamics and encourages a new morality in which both the genders male and female are treated equally. In the present scenario feminist literature is seen as a stronger tool to protest against oppression than ever before. Rather than merely reflecting the contemporary reality Indian women writers are trying to shape the society as a whole “a distinct and dynamic body of the feminist literature” there are a vast number of feminist writers who have played a vital role in shaping the lives of oppressed women from all walks of life.

Some of the strong feminist works that are breaking the “silence” are the *Chup: Breaking The Silence About India's Women* by Deepa Narayanan which is based on the 600 interviews. This novel breaks the barrier of silence on oppression and exposes societal pressure that constrains the women in present day India from childhood. Most of these girls are forced into

marriage. The text shows the different types of subordination and violence that they have faced in their entire life time.

Seeing like a Feminist by Nevedita Menon is another work in this genre. This work acts as an intellectual toolkit, challenging deeply entrenched patriarchal norms, unpacking the "natural " gender roles, and exploring issues like sexuality, domesticity, and the state's role in policing women. *Women's Testimonies* by Sharmila Range suggests some of the crucial interventions that have taken place. The book shows that the experiences of women's oppression are not even uniform; it mainly suggests the intersectional struggles of the Dalit women, challenging the male dominance and the upper class hegemony. We can see almost the same scenario in the novel *The Silence and the Storm* and also in the *Hang woman* by K.R Meera. These narratives act as a powerful encouragement that persuades women to enter the male dominated fields. These works show the courage shown by women in the face of challenges and how they overcome traditional boundaries. The protagonist serves as an idol for females to pursue unconventional careers and defy societal expectations.

In India the male reactions to feminist literature are deeply polarized, often split between defence resistance and progressive acceptance. Many men perceive these narratives as an "identity threat" or a direct challenge to their traditional privileges, leading to backlash movements like "save Indian Family" which view feminism as antagonistic to the family structure. Some male readers dismiss feminist writing as being cut off from reality or texts which focused solely on the elite, while others react with "bewilderment" to the rebellious nature of female protagonists. Conversely, a growing segment of men in academia and social

activism—such as those in the organization actively engage with these texts to understand how patriarchy also burdens them with rigid masculine ideals.

Historically, it was actually male social reformers like Raja Ram Monhan Roy who pioneered early feminist discourse in India. On the other hand, literature serves as a platform that turns individual pain into a collective "war cry." It moves beyond dry statistics to show the human heart break where a character's breakthrough becomes a blueprint for the reader's own life.

In many works women's support becomes a personal alliance which is political. At times it's a shared look between women that says "I see you, and you are not alone." This "paper-and-ink support" provides emotional strength for women fighting oppression, teaching them that their anger is valid and their ambition is not a sin. By humanising the struggle, these writers transform the lonely "I" of an abused woman into the powerful "We" of a movement, proving that while words can wound, they are also the very tools used to heal the spirit and make it strong. Feminist literature in India serves as a critical "social mirror," reflecting the harrowing abuse and powerful support systems that define a woman's political journey. Authors like Sashi Deshpande and Arunthathi Roy show that the quest for power can be ennobling as the downtrodden get visibility.

These works often expose how political institutions act as "male-dominated clubs" that use subtle and overt forms of exclusion—such as character-shaming or being dismissed as mere women ignorant about many things. The literature captures the quiet, human exhaustion of a female leader who must constantly prove she belongs, fighting the invisible "gatekeeping" that statistics alone cannot fully convey. Yet, this same literature also provides a vital emotional

architecture of support. It moves beyond policy to document the "sisterhood" and the rise of women's writings such as those described in Sharmila Rege's work on Dalit-Bahujan organisations—that offer a sanctuary of shared resilience. Through fictional readings of political ascents, writers transform the "lonely fighter" into a symbol of collective agency, teaching readers that a woman's political ambition is not a betrayal of her identity, but its ultimate expression. By depicting characters who turn public victories into fuel for change, feminist literature provides a blue print for the next generation, humanising the "mask of steel" into a relatable story of grit, survival, and the transformative power of female leadership.

Conclusion

The project attempted to discuss how the male oppression is often highlighted in novels like *When I Hit You* and *The Silence And The Storm* and also sees how the oppression faced is turned into power by women. The writers of these works have contributed a lot to our understanding of female autonomy and about male dominance. In the landscape of Indian English literature, the journey from being a victim to becoming a "survivor-story teller" represents the ultimate reclamation of the self. In works like Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You* and Kalpana Sharma's *The Silence and the Storm*, we see that male dominance is not just a personal flaw of one man, but a historic, systemic weight designed to keep women small.

However, these authors show that when women speak out, they transform their pain into a radical form of power, finally achieving Mary Wollstonecraft's vision of having "power over themselves." By documenting the raw reality of violence, these writers refuse to let women remain silent footnotes in a history written by men; instead, they turn the very act of surviving into a political weapon that shatters the mirrors of patriarchy. Through their courage, the "silence" that was once a tool of oppression becomes a "storm" of resistance, proving that a woman's voice—once found—is the most indestructible force against a world that tried to erase her it often highlights.

In the present scenario, male dominance in India is a paradox of progress and persistence. The traditional, religiously mandated oppression of women has given way to a more nuanced power dynamic where legal and social changes clash with deep-seated cultural norms. While women today are breaking barriers in every field, from the military to entrepreneurship, a significant portion of Indian society still grapples with archaic gender roles, leading to a "crisis

in traditional masculinity" where men struggle to adapt to new expectations. The change is visible in law and policy, such as the new policies and the growth of women led start ups and political participation at the local level. Yet, male dominance persists through the "son preference" that skews the sex ratio, the persistent wage gap, and the significant burden of unpaid domestic work that women shoulder.

Modern literature reflects this tension, moving from subtle critique to overt rebellion. Authors are actively deconstructing traditional masculinity, advocating for more inclusive models of gender relations, and challenging men to become allies for genuine equality in both public and private spheres. The current scenario, therefore, is a battlefield of the old and the new, where progress is undeniable but the deep-rooted systemic change needed for true gender parity remains a work in progress. In the contemporary landscape, feminist literature serves as a living bridge between Wholeness craft historical demand for autonomy and the modern reality where dominance has shifted from overt religious mandates to subtle, systemic control. By applying liberal, postcolonial, and theories, works like Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You* and Kalpana Sharma's *The Silence and the Storm* prove that while the "present scenario" offers better laws and education, the "power over oneself" is still a radical act.

These texts trace how male dominance has evolved into a "modern" mask—where even progressive, intellectual men can weaponise ideology to silence women—yet they also show that the modern as women use literature to dismantle the "sacrificial ideal" and reclaim their identities across the boundaries of caste and class. Ultimately, these narratives prove that the change we see today isn't just about women entering male spaces; it is about women successfully shattering the patriarchal mirrors to write a future where their survival is no longer a silent tragedy but a loud, political triumph.

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