

**MEENA'S ANXIETY AS SEEN IN MEENA KANDASAMY'S  
*WHEN I HIT YOU* NOVEL**

**THESIS**



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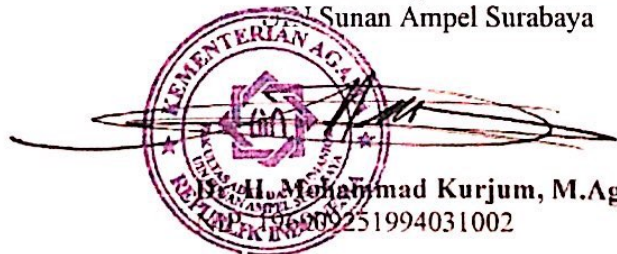
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## ABSTRACT

Suhandoko, K. T. A. N. (2022). *Meena's Anxiety As Seen in Meena Kandasamy's When I Hit You Novel*. English Department, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. Advisor: Dr. Abu Fanani, S.S., M.Pd.

Keywords: psychoanalysis, anxiety, defense mechanisms

This study aims to explain the anxiety of Meena, the main character in *When I Hit You* novel. This study focuses on three research questions that are 1) How is the anxiety experienced by the main character in the novel? 2) What factors contribute to the emergence of anxiety experienced by the main character? and 3) How does the main character overcome the anxiety?

This study used Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis theory, focusing on the types of anxiety, factors causing anxiety, and the defense mechanisms performed by the main character in the novel. Descriptive qualitative methods were used in this study to collect and analyze the data to answer the research questions.

The result of this study found that Meena as the main character in the novel experiences three types of anxiety which are neurotic anxiety, moral anxiety, and realistic anxiety. The types of anxiety experienced by Meena can be seen by; the feeling of tense and restless, the feeling of shame, guilt and worry, and also the fears of her abusive husband. Furthermore, the writer found several external factors causing the anxiety of Meena which comes from the marital abuse, pressure from her closest people, Meena being underestimated, and Meena's lack of social life. In the final result, the writer found that the main character uses five types of defense mechanisms to reduces her anxiety which are; sublimation, reaction formation, isolation, idealization, and fantasy.

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## ABSTRAK

Suhandoko, K. T. A. N. (2022). *Kecemasan Meena Seperti yang Terlihat di Novel When I Hit You oleh Meena Kandasamy*. Sastra Inggris, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. Dosen Pembimbing: Dr. Abu Fanani, S.S., M.Pd.  
Kata Kunci: psikoanalisis, kecemasan, mekanisme pertahanan

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan kecemasan Meena, tokoh utama dalam novel *When I Hit You*. Penelitian ini berfokus pada tiga rumusan masalah yaitu 1) Bagaimana kecemasan yang dialami oleh tokoh utama dalam novel? 2) Faktor-faktor apa saja yang berkontribusi terhadap munculnya kecemasan yang dialami oleh karakter utama? dan 3) Bagaimana karakter utama mengatasi kecemasan?

Penelitian ini menggunakan teori psikoanalisis oleh Sigmund Freud, dengan berfokus pada jenis-jenis, faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan kecemasan dan mekanisme pertahanan yang dilakukan oleh tokoh utama dalam novel. Metode kualitatif deskriptif digunakan dalam penelitian ini untuk mengumpulkan dan menganalisis data dan digunakan untuk menjawab rumusan masalah dalam penelitian.

Hasil dari penelitian ini menemukan bahwa Meena sebagai tokoh utama dalam novel mengalami tiga tipe kecemasan, yaitu kecemasan neurotik, kecemasan moral, dan kecemasan realistik. Tipe-tipe kecemasan yang dialami oleh Meena dapat dilihat dari; perasaan tegang dan gelisah, perasaan malu, menyesal, dan cemas, dan juga ketakutan dari suaminya yang kasar. Lebih lanjut, penulis menemukan beberapa faktor eksternal yang menyebabkan kecemasan pada Meena yang berasal dari kekerasan dalam rumah tangga, tekanan dari orang-orang terdekat, Meena yang diremehkan, dan kurangnya kehidupan sosial Meena. Pada hasil akhir, penulis menemukan bahwa tokoh utama menggunakan lima tipe mekanisme pertahanan untuk mengurangi perasaan cemas yaitu; sublimasi, reaksi formasi, isolasi, idealisasi, dan fantasi.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of Study

In life, people always want their life to go according to their expectations. However, not everything can go as how it should. There are many things that do not go as planned, and some of these things can make some people trapped in feelings of discontent, worry, anger, and these negative emotions can lead people into anxiety. Ong and Twohig (2022) state that anxiety is a feeling that arises when someone has an excessive concern about what-ifs and the worst-case scenario of a situation that does not even occur yet. Anxiety can be felt by someone either consciously or unconsciously. According to Ma and Miller (2021), a person who has anxiety feels unable to control their feelings or emotions. This happens because a person feels overwhelmed by excessive feelings of fear and worry caused by the non-fulfillment of their ego needs or desires. Some people find this quite distressing and uncomfortable for their emotional stability. When someone encounters a threat or danger, the adrenaline system will increase and will automatically send signals to the brain about the danger (Himanshu et al., 2020). As the result, someone receives the signal as a warning to prepare and secure themselves from danger.

Freud (2014) asserts that anxiety has three general types, that are realistic anxiety, neurotic anxiety, and moral anxiety. Realistic anxiety is a feeling that arises caused by possible threats and is easily identified. Different from realistic anxiety, neurotic anxiety appears when someone does not feel in control of

themselves. Lastly, the emergence of moral anxiety happens when someone fears violating their own norms and rules. Anxiety is helpful because it can be an action of personal reminder for people with low self-esteem to prepare themselves for dealing with a threat (Jonas et al., 2014). Therefore, anxiety can lead people to have a defense mechanism. Anxiety helps people to prepare and perform self-defense systems adaptively to the threats occurred in their life.

According to a recent report, the Covid-19 pandemic leads to a 25% increment in anxiety and depression caused by numerous reasons (World Health Organization, 2022). Long research has been conducted on the achievement of emotional well-being as the outcome of the performance of defense mechanisms (National Library of Medicine, 2021). Defense mechanisms will always be consciously or unconsciously done by people to achieve emotional stability. The defense mechanism is a method applied by an individual to deal with negative feelings that arise within themselves caused by the unfulfillment of their ego needs. So, defense mechanism plays an important role in human life as they can give protection from some threat and or danger.

The feeling of anxiety and the performance of defense mechanisms not only can be seen in real-life events but also in literary works. One of the many literary works that deliver the topic of anxiety and defense mechanism is a novel titled *When I Hit You* written by Meena Kandasamy. *When I Hit You* is a story following the journey of Meena as a young writer who married a university professor. The young Meena, who is still naive and not very familiar with the world, is then immersed into married life along with a man who considers marital

relationships and roles as husbands to be the same as ownership of Meena's entire life. Meena's husband taking the advantage of it to treat her as property and tries to take away Meena's life as an individual. Their married lives were filled with domestic violence, and torture executed by Meena's husband as verbally, physically, and sexually. The young Meena then began to realize the reality she was living is not the same as her expectation and needs then recognize the situation as a threat. The unfulfillment of Meena's emotional needs becomes one of the reasons that leads her to anxiety. As the story follows, Meena starts to perform defense mechanisms in order to preserve her emotional stability.

Following the journey of Meena to deal with anxiety, the *When I Hit You* novel depicted a perfect representation of how people in society, both in real life and literary works will encounter internal or external factor stressors that leads them to perform defense mechanism to overcome the feeling of anxiety. The writer is interested in analyzing the novel as it focuses on the topic that relates to the discussion, that is anxiety and defense mechanisms. Using the psychoanalysis approach by Sigmund Freud that can be used to assess the detailed personality of an individual (Lacan et al., 2020). Focusing on anxiety and defense mechanism, the writer aims to study how the main character in the novel suffer from anxiety and how she overcomes it by performing defense mechanism.

Furthermore, several previous studies have contributed to analyzing the anxiety and defense mechanism in literary works. Kashyap (2018) used a feminist view to determine the hidden life and oppression of Indian women found in the *When I Hit You* novel. Meanwhile, Mandal (2021) study the patriarchal practice

and how it results in the practice of domestic violence and the oppression of women in the *When I Hit You* novel. Besides that, Majhi (2018) study the patriarchal practices found in the *When I Hit You* novel and how it leads them to perform domestic abuse to dominate and control women's life. Although several studies have analyzed the same novel, none has been done by putting anxiety and defense mechanism as the main focus in analyzing the *When I Hit You* novel. Thus, the present study aims to show the anxiety experienced by the main character in the *When I Hit You* novel and the defense mechanism deployed.

### **1.2 Problems of the Study**

Based on the background study mentioned above, the writer formulates the research questions as:

1. How is the anxiety experienced by the main character in the novel?
2. What factors contribute to the emergence of anxiety experienced by the main character?
3. How does the main character overcome the anxiety?

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

This study is expected to give significant knowledge and contribution to the matters of literary study both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the findings of this study can broaden and give a deep understanding of psychoanalysis theory which focuses on types of anxiety and defense mechanism. Understanding the theory can be used as a form to analyze any literary work and also can be enforced in everyday life.

Practically, the result of this study can be use as a reference to other researchers, especially for English Literature department students with the same area of the topic who wants to research that deals with the *When I Hit You* novel and or other literary works using the topic of anxiety and defense mechanism. It can also be a good reference for the readers to gain further information about the personality structure and its building of defenses to overcome anxiety so that it can provide a useful guide to know more about their ego needs and to achieve mental stability.

#### **1.4 Scope and Limitation**

To avoid any irrelevant problems, the writer focuses on analyzing the data collected from narratives, dialogues, and conversations from the *When I Hit You* novel by Meena Kandasamy as the scope of the study. Furthermore, the writer limits the discussion to the types of anxiety experienced by the main character and the defense mechanism performed by the main character using the psychoanalysis approach.

#### **1.5 Research Methods**

##### **1.5.1 Research Design**

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method. Nassaji (2015) defines a qualitative descriptive method as a way to discover the complexity and to examine how the study takes place and what factors affect it. A qualitative descriptive method also provides a more in-depth observation in understanding the studies that were not yet understood and when there are still many things to

explore thoroughly. A descriptive qualitative is a perfect method to use to analyze the social aspect of research (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). The goal of this method is to examine the types of anxiety found in the main character in the *When I Hit You* novel and how she overcomes the situation by building a defense mechanism.

### **1.5.2 Data Sources**

In this study, the writer uses two data sources that are primary and secondary. The primary data sources are taken from the text written in the *When I Hit You* novel by Meena Kandasamy, collected by highlighting important utterances of the narrative and dialogues related to the problem of the study. Furthermore, the secondary sources used in this study are the thesis, journals, articles, textbooks, and websites that support the problem.

### **1.5.3 Data Collection**

In collecting the data, the writer applied several steps, that are:

1. The writer read the novel to get a general understanding of the plot, the topic, the characters and their role in the story, and the context of the story.
2. The writer took note and underlined the phrase from the novel to be analyzed by searching the evidence related to the significance of this study.



3. The writer collected and categorize the data based on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis theory which focuses on the types of anxiety and the defense mechanism on the main character in the novel.

#### **1.5.4 Data Analysis**

To analyze the data, the writer will use several steps below:

1. The writer categorizes and describes the three types of anxiety, which are realistic anxiety, neurotic anxiety, and moral anxiety represented by the main character in the novel.
2. The writer analyses the factor causing anxiety presented by the main character in the novel.
3. The writer defines the defense mechanism deployed by the main character in the novel.
4. The writer makes a conclusion from the result of the analysis in this study.

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## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 Psychoanalysis**

In literary works, every character created has their own characteristics or personality. Each of the characters has something that differentiates them from one another. The characters are often portrayed based on real-life experiences. Hence, the character in literary works also experiences some unpleasant emotions like anxiety, fear, guilt, or worry. Same with the real-life situation, when a character did not know how to cope with their feelings, they would find all means to protect themselves from the negative emotion. This situation depicted the relationship between human psychics and how it affects every little detail of their actions. In brief, the term that is perfectly applicable in analyzing a characteristic is psychology. Thus, the writer uses one of the psychology branches that is psychoanalysis to analyze the character in this study.

The psychoanalysis approach has successfully emerged as one of the disciplines generally used by many researchers. Elliot (2017) views psychoanalysis as a significant approach that can justify the importance and relevant value in literary studies. Psychoanalysis is a theory used to reveal the dynamic of personality in a person and can be the form to study and identify the confidential desires and anxiety of a character. Anzieu (2020) believes that psychoanalysis is the perfect tool to discover the hidden reason which influences people and the way they act. In psychoanalysis, Freud demonstrated the model of the mind consists of three layers that are conscious, preconscious, and

unconscious also known as the topographical model. The conscious is located on the outermost of the human mind leads people to be fully aware of their surroundings and what they really feel about the current environment of their life. In the same way, the conscious is the one holding onto one's feeling, emotion, thoughts, or urges which then influences the behavior they are performing. Similarly, the preconscious is assign to all the things that place in the unconscious but can be adjusted to the conscious at a particular time when needed. The preconscious is strongly correlated with the memory which stays in the unconscious, although it did not deliver immediate awareness, one can perform some effort to trigger the preconscious to arise. In contradictory, the unconscious becomes the place to conceal the unpleasant feelings, pain, conflict, or anxiety that are too painful to be stored in the conscious so that they will not accessible to the consciousness as it does not reach the rational (Wilson, 2004).

Psychoanalysis is a theory used to expose the complexity in the human's mind consequential to the influence of their behavior. Tyson (2006) believes that psychoanalysis encompasses the journey of individuals starting from childhood to adolescent with each memory and history from the experience that have been through. In 1923, Freud's study of personality theory known as the *tripartite human psyche* divided human personality into three parts. First is the id which functions as the first and basic personality component forms since birth and acts as psychic energy to lead individuals in fulfilling their basic needs such as eating, having sex, and resisting pain. The main role of the id is to seek pleasure and instantaneously avoid discomfort. The id only functions to search for satisfaction

without considering any other things. Second is the ego which function as the main personality structure that still contemplates and considers some aspects of reality. The ego is in charge of rational thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving. Third is the superego which is functional as the filter of the actions in fulfilling one's desires with the considerations of norms and moral values. In conclusion, the main function of the Id is to maintain basic needs, while the ego functions is to limit the demand of desires, and superego adds the moral values and norms to every proceeding act. All things considered, the three components of personality are related to complementing and supporting each other with their own roles as part of human personality. Those three elements continuously work together establishing a variety of behavior. Each of the components are always interacting with each other in ways that greatly influence the personality of individuals. So, it is clear that the three components of personality are very needed to maintain emotional stability.

Based on the statement above, a character in literary work can be analyzed through the lense of psychoanalysis as it deals with the human's mind and personality. Hossain (2017) stated that psychoanalysis can be used as the main tool for interpreting hidden meaning in literary works as it seeks the critical identification of personal characteristics of the unfulfillment desires, unresolved emotions, guilt, worry, mixed-feelings, psychological conflicts or more the same found in specific character in literary works. Moreover, psychoanalysis also assists to examine the personality of the writer which contributes to the character in their literary works. In conclusion, psychoanalysis generally adopts the author's

personal experience as it will unconsciously influencing the personality of the characters in the literary works. In this study, psychoanalysis is used to find out the personal experience of the main character in the *When I Hit You* novel.

## **2.2 Anxiety**

Anxiety is the result of the conflict occurring in the unconscious between the id against ego and the superego. Anxiety appears when the id seeks pleasure in a way that it defies their personal or social values and norms (Grove, 2021). Freud examines that the ego's dependency on the id resulting in the emergence of neurotic anxiety, meanwhile the ego's dependency on the superego will generate moral anxiety, and the dependency on the realistic world will bring out realistic anxiety. Freud assesses that anxiety function as a mechanism that will protect individuals by signaling the occurrence of a threat or danger.

### **2.2.1 Neurotic Anxiety**

Neurotic anxiety is the feeling that arise due to the occurrence of an unknown threat or danger (Kurniasari, 2022, p. 19). Predominantly, neurotic anxiety appears by virtue of the id's impulses and is located in the ego. The neurotic system is concerned that the punishment afflicted is the one causing the anxiety. The development of neurotic anxiety acquires from the childhood experience related to punishment or threats from parents or other people who are considered to have authority (Kuchta et al., 2021). For example, the signs of neurotic anxiety can be seen from the change in mood, thinking, or behavior such as; shivering or trembling, sweating, feeling tense and restless, moodiness or

mood swings, poor decision making, insomnia or excessive sleeping, overreacting, impulsive, and defensive. In conclusion, neurotic anxiety happens because of the fear of punishment if the impulses are released.

### **2.2.2 Moral Anxiety**

Moral anxiety emerges because of the conflict between the ego and superego (Feist, 2008). The anxiety that arise as a result of the conflict to seek pleasure and realistic needs are blocked by the superego. Generally speaking, people who have an ideal superego would feel guilty about violating social norms and acting contrary to one's moral values. For example, people who feel like they do something contrary to their own values or to the social norms will experience the feeling of shame, guilty, and helpless or overwhelm. Summing up, moral anxiety occurs because of one's failure in acting consistently with what is considered morally right (Cherry, 2020, p. 2).

### **2.2.3 Realistic Anxiety**

Realistic anxiety is the feeling of uncertainty that leads to fear of a threat that is still unknown (Glas, 2020). Realistic anxiety arises even when the danger is not yet occurring. This anxiety derives from the fear of real-world events, such as the fear of wild animals, fire, darkness, or any other things perceive as a threat or danger.

## **2.3 Factors Causing Anxiety**

The external and internal stressor for most people are often happening in daily life and it can affect people physically, mentally, or emotionally. According to Diamond (2022), there are two factors causing the emergence of anxiety which are external and internal factors.

### **2.3.1 External Factors**

External factors in anxiety comes from the things happening in life that are uncontrollable. Anxiety caused by external factors occurs from the negative circumstances happening in people's closest surroundings or environment (Suldo et al., 2008). External factors are something that people consciously aware of and mainly includes major events happening in one's life, such as losing someone, losing a job, or being a victim of sexual assault. Furthermore, as the external factors are unable to be controlled, the only way to reduce anxiety is to adjust how to perceive the unpleasant situation happening in one's life so that it does not extremely affect their life.

### **2.3.2 Internal Factors**

On the other hand, internal factors is an impulse causing anxiety that comes within human's inner self. Generally, an internal factor of anxiety is controllable as people can still manage their personal circumstances so that they can freely perceive things as they want to be. The main symptoms of internal factors causing anxiety comes from the producing of thought causing stress and illogical beliefs in every person (Lipp, 2001). Furthermore, internal factors can

also cause people to have low self-esteem, pessimistic thinking, negative self-talk, and unhealthy attitudes. The negative thoughts people make can cause them to feel unease, and uncertain, and leads them to have low self-esteem and anxiety (Luders et al., 2016). An internal factor is the one giving people reason to question the things that going unwell because it does not match their expectations.

#### **2.4 Defense Mechanism**

The defense mechanism appears to obscure the negative circumstances which can give a bad influence on the human mind. While anxiety purposes to deliver the signal of threat and danger, defense mechanisms are the ones responsible for protecting individuals by reducing the feeling of pain or stress caused by anxiety. A defense mechanism is a psychological strategy performed by a person, a group of people, or even in bigger communities to face the reality and preserve emotional stability (Semium, 2006). As the main character in the human mind, the ego exerts every effort to maintain the stability relation between reality, the id, and the superego. However, when anxiety takes control of the human mind, the ego has to find a way to stand up for oneself. Waqas et al., (2018) assert that the ego will perform the defense by unconsciously blocking the impulses or changing them to a different object which will be easier to obtain and not to endanger. Freud classifies the defense mechanisms into eight different terms, which are denial, projection, repression, suppression, sublimation, displacement, rationalization, and isolation (Schultz, 2017, p. 49). Furthermore, there are also some advance defense mechanisms that are idealization and compensation.



### **2.4.1 Denial**

Denial is the defense mechanism used by people to cope with unpleasant feelings by denying reality which is considered very distressful (Pressley & McCormick, 2007, p. 139). Naturally, people will refuse in believing the hurtful real events because they cannot comprehend what happened in their lives. However, if someone always practices denial to reduce the feeling of anxiety, one can actually reject the actual scenes from reality and is incapable of seeing the reality of the world (Ullah et al., 2021, p. 4).

### **2.4.2 Projection**

Projection happens when a person's internal impulses are causing extreme anxiety. Thus, to lessen the feeling of anxiety, the projection has a role to channel undesirable impulses onto a different object (Feist, 2008, p. 43). In other words, projection is a defense mechanism used by people who are aware of their negative circumstances, but because they feel guilty to disregard their own moral values, they project their negative quality onto an external object or generally another person. Furthermore, the defense mechanism frequently used by adolescents is projection and it is more commonly used by men than women (Cramer, 1991).

### **2.4.3 Repression**

Repression is self-defense against an internal threat. Repression is also considered the initial type of defense mechanism. Repression performs to exile the undesirable id's impulses from the conscious back to the unconscious in order that it will stay unaware. Repression is the strongest defense mechanism as it functions

as the basic root for other defenses to repress all of the unpleasant feelings to objectify emotional stability for the individual (Feist, 2008, p. 35).

#### **2.4.4 Suppression**

By the same token, suppression as a defense mechanism has the same purpose as repression but it is being performed in full awareness. Suppression deploys by blocking unpleasant circumstances and willingly making efforts to alter the impulses to the unconscious in expectation of reducing anxiety (Costa, 2020). Briefly, suppression is when people try their hardest to not remember any events that will lead them to the feeling of guilt.

#### **2.4.5 Sublimation**

Sublimation is one of the defenses that have positive value when it is being performed as it transforms objectionable impulses into something that is perceived to be acceptable by the human mind (Pressley & McCormick, 2007, p. 140). Sublimation as a defense mechanism functions to alter undesirable impulses through art, music, and literature as the creative cultures (Feist, 2008, p. 44).

#### **2.4.6 Displacement**

On the contrary, displacement uses the same term and brings the same purpose as sublimation but in a different way. Displacement assigns to divert unpleasant feelings to another object to release and satisfy their emotion. Moreover, people who are performing displacement are mainly transferring their anxiety to the less threatening object (Pressley & McCormick, 2007, p. 139). As an illustration, when a student gets scolded by their teacher, then they devote their

anger to their younger sister. Displacement tends to distract a person from their real problems and focus on releasing their anger toward any object or people (Tyson, 2011, p. 84).

#### **2.4.7 Rationalization**

Rationalization appears when the real events happening in a human's life are unable to be perceived by the ego, so the defense work to search for justification in order to validate the ego. People tend to use rationalization when they are trying to make excuses for their negative behavior or mistakes to be reasonable and can be received by logic. Furthermore, rationalization in its performance has two purposes which function to reduce anxiety when someone fails to achieve their goals and to accuse other people so that they do not take the blame on their selves (Sahrani, 2020, p. 25).

#### **2.4.8 Isolation**

Isolation is a process in which an individual tries to unconsciously block the unpleasant feelings by remembering the real events while not receiving any personal feeling or emotion that comes from the event. This type of defense mechanism is performed by avoiding the idea of a person or situation that is distressing (Bailey & Pico, 2020).

#### **2.4.9 Idealization**

Idealization is a process of self-defense purposes to attribute the best qualities to another person or object. Idealization mainly works to protect someone from internal or external conflict in a relationship by dominating the

mind into thinking of the perfect traits of the other person (Cummings et.al., 2020). To illustrate, someone who idolizes a K-Pop idol will exaggeratedly attribute the positive qualities of their idol, imagining their idol to be kind-hearted, respectful, and funny then ignoring the fact that their idol is also rude and arrogant.

#### **2.4.10 Compensation**

Compensation is a defense mechanism used to achieve something in one area as a coping for past failures in other areas (Cherry, 2020). This type of defense mechanism has the purpose to cover up the feeling of guilt and disappointment caused by weaknesses, incompetence, or feeling of inadequacy in some part of people's life. For instance, when someone feels like they consume too much junk food, they might compensate by working out to feel healthy.

#### **2.4.11 Reaction Formation**

Reaction formation is a defense mechanism used by people to transform an unacceptable feeling or emotion by acting opposite to what they really feel (Zulfaisya and Hasra, 2020). For example, someone treating their co-worker that they strongly dislike in an excessively friendly manner so that they can hide their true feelings.

#### **2.4.12 Fantasy**

Fantasy is a defense mechanism used to avoid the reality by fabricating a safe place that stand in one's mind. Fantasy function to help people achieve

temporary satisfaction through their imagination from their real-life conflicts or undesirable life (Miller, 2019).

## 2.5 Previous Studies

Studies about anxiety and defense mechanism have been extensively observed in numerous fields of study. Therefore, the writer suggests several related studies using the same topic to make a comparison for this study.

The first study conducted by Kashyap (2018) analyse the feminist view found in *When I Hit You* novel. The researcher delves into the hidden life of Indian women who grew up to only be reminded that women are nothing and that they do not have the right to speak up and protect themselves from domestic abuse, marital rape, or contravention of their personal life.

The second study conducted by Mandal (2021) analyses the patriarchal practice found in the *When I Hit You* novel encountered by the main character the novel. In this study, she focuses on how women are trapped in a patriarchal society and suffer from domestic violence which occurs both physically and psychologically. She also highlighted the real condition of marriage life in which there is found a great deal of oppression of women. The final result of this study shows the critical thinking of Meena Kandasamy as the writer and her assessment of women in modern society living in a patriarchal marriage.

Lastly, a study conducted by Majhi (2018) analyses the domestic violence found in Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You* novel and John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*. In her study, she investigated how patriarchy affected the behavior of intimate relationship between partners when one person tries to control another.

The final result of her study shows how men will use domestic violence when they find their partner to be obedient to keep them under their domination.

Drawing from all the research above, although the three researchers uses the same novel entitled *When I Hit You* by Meena Kandasamy discussing the feminist view and patriarchal practice in the novel. To the best of the writer's knowledge, there is no other researcher that has conducted the study using psychoanalysis approach on the topic of anxiety and defense mechanisms in the novel entitled *When I Hit You* written by Meena Kandasamy.



UIN SUNAN AMPEL  
S U R A B A Y A

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **ANALYSIS**

In this chapter, the writer aims to answer the research question stated in chapter one. The discussion analyzed in this chapter is divided into three parts, first, is the anxiety occurring in Meena's life, second is the factors causing Meena's anxiety, and last is how Meena deals with the anxiety by performing defense mechanisms.

#### **3.1 Meena's Anxiety**

Meena is a young woman who comes from a small town in India. As a writer, Meena always feels like she already learns many things. She perceived herself to be smart but not until she met someone. Her life starts to change when she encounters a man who works as a lecturer and also a politician. "I met the man who was going to be my husband. I was enchanted." (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 28). As Meena starts to have romantic feelings for the man, she feels like he is the only one that she wants to spend her life with. Meena regarded him as someone who is very smart, and intelligent, but funny at the same time. "This man is the real deal, I thought. He was going to make me look at everything differently." (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 31). However, Meena is too naive to fathom that all the good qualities she perceived from the man are not completely portrayed in the way she thinks highly of him. After finally marrying the man, Meena starts to uncover the true cast of her husband. The personality, character, and how her husband handles his anger, all aspects found inside him are far from what Meena

expected. Her dream to live with the love of her life and start a happy family suddenly fall apart as she starts to feel anxiety. The unfulfillment of Meena's expectations in her relationship caused the emergence of anxiety, as she comprehends that her husband is abusive and manipulative. Thus, there are found three types of anxiety in Meena as she deals with the undesirable situation in her marriage life. The three anxieties found are neurotic anxiety, moral anxiety, and realistic anxiety.

### **3.1.1 Meena Feeling Tense and Restless**

In her life, Meena often hears about how others fail in their relationship, especially in marriage. Growing up in a happy family, although her parents oftentimes show things that are contrary to what she believes, the relationship of her parents is one of the reasons for Meena as the standard of her dream relationship; a long-lasting relationship. Meena thinks that she can finally start her own family when she met this one man, a man which whom she fell in love deeply. However, not all things can go as how planned. Meena wrongly judges her husband. The one that she thinks would be the perfect husband turns out to be far from what she imagined. In her marriage life, Meena regularly deals with the abusive behavior of her husband. Moreover, she also has to deal with how manipulative her husband is. All of the bad things that happen to her in her relationship with her husband lead her to anxiety.

At the time when Meena and her husband talk about their agreement on restricting Meena's work time as a freelancer on Facebook. As Meena demands her husband related to her work, her husband starts being manipulative because



she is not being obedient to him. “There is no reason why you should be on Facebook. It’s narcissism. It’s exhibitionism. It’s a waste of time... I cannot let you endanger me... If you love me, this is the quickest way you will make up your mind.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 50-51). Hearing that, Meena feels the arousal of anxiety resulting from her inability to perceive what just happened. Her husband ruins her expectations of what a family is, she does not assume that to be married means you have to let go of your rights and freedom.

“For a split second, I think about taking a matchstick and burning my own skin. His aim is to make me suffer for his pain; I do not want to suffer two-fold by inflicting this bizzare punishment on myself. Another matchstick is lit and put out. And another and another. I’ve stopped counting. It almost makes me feel that he is enjoying himself.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 51)

From the quotation above, Meena shows neurotic anxiety as she feels tense and eager to fight against her husband as he violates Meena’s rights to work as a freelancer. Her husband manipulates her by saying that she cannot use Facebook as it will waste her time. Her husband seems like he cannot see Meena having a job as it dismisses his ego and ownership of Meena. However, seeing how her husband always interferes with her rights, Meena does not feel terrified of the threat from her husband. In the phrase “For a split second, I think about taking a matchstick and burning my own skin.”, Meena shows her boldness by returning the same energy from her husband. The neurotic anxiety of Meena is further present in the phrase “I do not want to suffer two-fold by inflicting this bizarre punishment on myself,” which explains how she is not actually afraid of burning her own skin which highlighted her feeling of tense caused by the unfulfillment of her needs.

Meena's husband's excuse for disallowing her from using Facebook as a freelancer seems like a trivial problem. However, the main point shown in the novel depicted that his behavior seems like the start of something worse. It is then proven by the feeling of isolation in Meena as she does not have any place to escape from the reality. Her husband starts cutting off all her social life and it results in how she is barely communicating with her parents and friends. Those events add a reason for Meena to have anxiety.

Aside from disallowing Meena to do her job as a freelancer which is enough to interfere with Meena's life, not only that, but her husband has also proven to have an affair with an actress. "I disclose to him that I heard of his dalliance with an actress. I report back to him, in excruciating detail. After a journalist calls me up to inform me that my lover's stopover in Singapore had something more to it." (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 116). Meena found out that her husband is cheating on her when he should be on a work trip, but instead she got a phone call that inform her of the real presence of her husband. She finally knew that her husband is in Singapore with his mistress. Those situation leads Meena to feel restless as she realizes that her biggest fear is really happening and that it is not just her instinct.

"One of my friends says he is supporting an upcoming academic because they share a bed as well as political passion, and the day I run into her in his office, I freeze, I cannot stay in her presence. I do not believe every story that comes my way, I know that some of it is dubious. But I cannot always contain myself, I bring it up despite my best efforts. These rumours that are passed on to me hunker down in the trenches of my mind, ready to charge when I feel neglected. It does not unsettle him. He dismisses it as the handiwork of his detractors – the occupational hazard of being a politician." (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 116 – 117)

The quotation above shows how Meena caught that her husband is cheating. After receiving a call from a journalist saying that her husband's work trip to Singapore seems suspicious and have something more to it, her friend also informs her about the relationship between her husband and the mistress. It is known that her husband has managed to maintain his mistress with the study. The phrase "One of my friends says he is supporting an upcoming academic because they share a bed as well as political passion..." explains the reason why her husband supports other woman's studies. It is known that her husband and his mistress have slept together and they also share the same interest in politics. This situation is hurting Meena's ego knowing that her husband, the same husband who forbids her to work is supporting another woman in their study. The phrase "...and the day I run into her in his office, I freeze, I cannot stay in her presence," explains Meena's anxiety when she witnessed his husband's affair in front of her eyes. Meena froze and she cannot stay in her presence signaling her anxiety looking directly at her husband having a relationship with someone else. "Marriage has ruined my romanticism, by teaching me that this thing of beauty can be made crude. Bitch. Whore. Slut. And yet, for every insult that has been flung in my face..." (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 92). The awful things that have been done by her husband undermine her romantic view of marriage. What Meena received from her husband, all the abuse and manipulation has become the reason for the anxiety that occurs in her life.

In conclusion, Meena experience neurotic anxiety from being manipulated by her husband and then being cheated on, Meena's instinct sends a signal to her

ego informing her that there are some occurrences that undermine her expectations of marriage life. Meena feeling tense and restless signs the inability to satisfy her desires, which in this case is to have a happy relationship with her husband.

### 3.1.2 Meena's Shame, Guilt, and Worry

In her life, Meena also encounters moral anxiety which can be seen from her feeling of shame, guilt, and worry. When Meena is finally aware of the true color of her husband, she starts to think about making a big decision that is contrary from her own value. Meena thinks of giving up her marriage, as it will hurt her more if she just stays silent while surviving all of the distressing situation her husband does. However, her decision to let go of her husband and being a widow after a very short marriage of 4 months makes her worried and causes her anxiety. The negative thought of her being a widow is violating her own value.

“I am the woman who was a battered wife. I am the same wife who ran away.”

“I am the woman whose parentage is not probed. I am the woman who does not provide evidence of lineage, the one who does not have to sketch my family tree with its mangled roots, with its share of concubines and kept women, with its incorrigible branches of bastardized children.”

“I am the woman who will be cursed by society for being passed from man to man to man, hand to hand to hand. I am the woman at whom society cannot spit or throw stones because this me is a she who is made up only of words on a page, and the lines she speaks are those that everyone hears in their own voice.”

“I am the woman men will not take home to their mother.”

“I am the woman whose reputation is rusting.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 245 – 246)

From the quotation above, it can be seen that Meena is feeling worry. Her way of thinking is that society will not be accepting her and degrading her value

as a woman making her immersed in feelings of anxiety. The phrase “I am the woman who was a battered wife. I am the same wife who ran away,” interprets Meena’s feeling shame as she views herself only as someone who’s been abused by her husband and that all she can do is run away. Meena feels like she wrongs the moral value of being a good wife. Moreover, Meena not having a child is also becomes the reason for her feeling shame. Taebi et al. (2021) state that the stigma in society about women and them not having a child becomes a burden and pressure. As a result, Meena looks down on herself as she thinks that she does something contrary to society’s stigma. Having a relationship after she parted ways with her ex-husband makes Meena feel like she is being judged. The phrase “I am the woman who will be cursed by society for being passed from man to man to man, hand to hand to hand,” examines how Meena thinks that the society is diminishing women and their relationship with men. Meena also feels like she is being unworthy, she assumes that she lost her reputation from what had happened in her life, especially as a widow.

In conclusion, the experience of acting contrary from her own value and the social stigma are the main factor of her to feel shame, guilty, and worry. Becoming a widow is extremely affecting Meena’s life. After all that happened, Meena began to feel like she lost her sparks, self-esteem, and value. How Meena feels like she wrongs her value of being a good wife. How the norms and moral values in society make her feel like she has done wrong. How society perceives women in marriage, how they degrade women on their failure in marital

relationships, and pressure women in everything they do cause Meena on having moral anxiety.

### **3.1.3 Meena's Fear of Her Abusive Husband**

Besides neurotic and moral anxiety, the fear of real-life danger can also lead to anxiety. Realistic anxiety can easily define as related to real-life events. Meena encounters realistic anxiety when she is being abused by her husband. Although she feels like she is used to it, there are times when she thought her husband has gone too far. Meena is just a regular woman, she does not have the power to fight against her husband physically. "Trying to recollect the first time I was hit by my husband, there are only hot glass tears and the enduring fear of how often it has come to pass." (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 69). The first time Meena is abused by her husband, she cannot do anything but cry. After many times Meena accepts her life to be forever under the shadow of fear, terrified of what is going to happen. Meena feels like she does not deserve to be physically tortured. She is being a good wife, she is doing all the house chores, and taking good care of her husband. All she does was just trivial; talking to a friend, deleting unnecessary emails, and leaving the plate unwashed as she need to rest. "...sometimes, his bones of contention are so thin that they make me wonder if any accusation is only a ruse and excuse to hit me." (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 69). Meena thought that her husband is always searching for an excuse so he can abuse her. It can be seen during her marriage, her husband has always been abusing her.

"When he hits me, the most frightening part is not the pain and the possible scarring and the perverted sense of shame. 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.”

“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.”

“When he hits me, these thoughts pile on in quick succession.”

“When he hits me, the terror flows from the fear that today he uses his bare hands, but tomorrow he could wield a heavy-buckled belt, he could grab an iron rod, he could throw a chair, that he could break open my head against a wall.”

“Every day, I inch closer to death, to dying, to being killed, to the fear that I will end up in a fight whose result I cannot reverse.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 155)

From the quotation above, it can be seen that Meena fears her abusive husband. Meena feels terrified of what the terrible things her husband could do to her. Meena thinks that her husband is still dissatisfied with all of the things that he does to her. Day by day, Meena always suffers from the abusive behavior of her husband. From the phrase “...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.”, the occurrence of realistic anxiety found in Meena when she realizes that she does not have the ability to stand up for herself and to fight against her husband. She is terrified because she knew that she cannot prevent the abuse to not happen. Furthermore, Meena also feels the terror of when her husband torturing her. Meena thought that over time, her husband should have gathered the courage to be more vicious in committing heinous acts against her. The phrase “...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,” reflects Meena’s fear

that her husband will actually do such horrible things. As a result, Meena's fear culminated as she realised that every day, she stepped forward closer to death.

In conclusion, Meena often encounters realistic anxiety. The feeling of horror and terror of her husband always frightens her. Becoming the punch bag to her husband, Meena began to think that as she walk far in her relationship with her husband, it is equal for her to come closer to death. Meena's inability to fight against her husband and her not having the power to stand up for herself caused her stress. Meena cannot comprehend the awful things her husband does to her. She cannot imagine what could happen in the future if her husband did more and take things too far. Therefore, Meena feels anxiety because she realizes that she cannot escape from the abusive relationship.

### **3.2 Factors Causing Meena's Anxiety**

There are many factors causing the emergence of anxiety in Meena's life. Specifically, the factors of anxiety are divided into two types; external factors and internal factors. External factors in anxiety result from the uncontrollable things occurring in life. On contrary, the internal factors of anxiety are controllable as it comes within one's self. In the novel, there is only found external factors in causing Meena's anxiety which comes from the marital abuse, pressure from closest people, being underestimated, and lack of social life.

#### **3.2.1 Marital Abuse**

In her married life, Meena regularly finds herself as the victim of her husband's abusive behavior. In completing her role as a good housewife, Meena



always takes care of her husband and the household chores. However, a little mistake from Meena is enough of an excuse for her husband to commit marital abuse. Furthermore, there has been various evidence of the abusive behavior of her husband. One time, Meena is minding her business doing her work as a freelancer. Coming unannounced, her husband furiously told her to stop doing her job. Feeling her freedom deprived, she tries to stand up for herself by explaining that her job has nothing to do with her being a good wife. Following his pride and ego, Meena's husband feels like she starts to have the courage to fight back, her husband then feels like Meena is no longer obedient to him so he releases his anger by abusing Meena.

“My husband is railing at me, slapping me, throwing my laptop across the small kitchen, forcing me to delete a manuscript, a non-fiction book-inprogress, because somewhere in its pages there is a mention of the word lover. He accuses me of carrying my past into our present, and this treason is evidence enough that there is no hope or space for the future to flourish.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 87)

From the quotation above, it can be seen how Meena deals with the abusive behavior of her husband. Meena was being railed and slapped because she is writing for her job. Other than that, her husband also forces her to delete the script she has been writing. The phrase “He accuses me of carrying my past into our present, and this treason is evidence enough that there is no hope or space for the future to flourish,” examines that the reason behind his abusive behavior is that he feels unlogically jealous of nothing, he then accusing her of thinking about her past life. “He is channeling his anger, practicing his outrage. I am the wooden cuing board banged against the countertop. I am the claring plates swung into the cupboards. I am the unwashed glass being thrown to the door. Shaer and shards

and diamond sparkle of tiny pieces.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 131). Meena is finally aware that she was just exploited to be the victim of her husband’s resentment. As the result, Meena began to realize that it is impossible for her in expecting that she will live a happy relationship with her husband in the future.

The abusive behavior of Meena’s husband is not occurring only once in a while. Meena has to face the reality to be the victim of marital abuse every day. In the meantime, when Meena just tell her parents about what actually happened in her marriage, she feels disappointed with her parents as they want her to just stay silent and be obedient to her husband in order to save the marriage. Meena then tries to be silent and accept the fact that no one stands up for her, she should stand up for herself. “I am unfazed when he assumes that this silence stems from my defeat. He sees it as a sign of victory.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 161). Realizing that Meena turn to be silent, her husband did not see them as if something is wrong, but as a sign of obedience. He feels that Meena is fully under his control.

However, the longer Meena turns to be silent and seems like did not respond to anything her husband says, it irritates him. He then becomes resentful and releases his anger by abusing Meena.

“My hair is gathered up in a bunch in his hand now. He is lifting me by my hair alone. All the blood is rushing to my head, my thighs fight to feel the hard wood of the chair. I am in pain. He drags me from the table and into the bedroom. I feel the heavy, funereal drumbeats of marriage as he forces my sari up around my waist.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 163)

In the quotation above, Meena is being tortured by her husband as she just becoming unfazed and silent. To see Meena become apathetic, his anger leads him to accuse her of everything; accusing her of cheating and accusing her of

disobedience. “My silence becomes an invincible shield. He attempts to penetrate its surface with every conceivable tactic to provoke me into conversation, but he fails.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 162). Meena's act of ignoring her husband has led him to the feeling frustration and it triggers the urge for him to perform abusive behavior toward Meena.

The marital abuse in Meena’s relationship does not end that easily. After telling her parents that she suffers from her marriage, it seems like no one believes her. “Family and friends are my only option. But he plays the role of dutiful son-in-law to my parents.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 183). Being manipulative as he is, the reason why no one is believing in Meena, not even her parents, is because her husband consciously took the role of a good husband in front of everyone. Thus, when Meena tries to convince her parents of what he actually does to her, they do not believe her. As toxic as their relationship is, when the arguments between Meena and her husband start occurring, he cannot resolve the problem without leading everything into a threat. Her husband always solves the problem by attacking Meena physically.

“I will skin your scalp. It will be slow, but I will do a very thorough job of it. It will be very painful, but precision always has its element of pain. All this beauty that you boast about will be gone. Your hair will be gone. I will be kind. I will remove every mirror from your presence. This punishment is not only for you. You will not die. Not immediately anyway.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 184)

What her husband has done to Meena becomes more and more terrifying. He starts to get brave at threatening Meena with death. The thing that goes just from trivial reason has gone too far. All the horrible things in her marriage life should not be happening and be perceived by anyone. The horror of her husband

saying that he will slowly torture her to death is very distressing. As if it was not enough for him to torture Meena in a such horrible way, her husband carry over his last action until Meena decided that she have to run away.

“I exceed my wrien brief. He shouts and screams at me as he pins me to the floor of the living room, but I no longer hear him. He is holding my face down with his foot, his toes digging into my cheeks, stamping on my ears. This is how he demands my silence. I see his lips form words – whore, bitch, cunt, pros-ti-tute – but his voice no longer reaches me. On the floor, my hands clenching his ankles, I look like a woman offering prayers, like someone pleading for her life. The blows rain down on me and then, finally, the ringing in my ears is broken by the phrase I have been waiting for: ‘I am going to bring this to an end. Now. You are going to die. I should have done this long ago.’” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 212)

The quotation above shows the ending story of Meena and her husband. Meena finally decided to give up on her marriage. The torture from her husband has gone too far, Meena is actually preparing herself to die. This final act began when Meena confronts her husband about all the awful things he does to her. “A brave men doesn’t hit his wife. You, my husband, are not a brave man.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 212). As her husband finds her having the courage to finally condemn him, he feels like he is being insulted. He starts to shout and screams at her with a feeling of resentment. He then pins her to the floor, stepping on her cheek, stamping on her ears, and threatening her that he should have killed her long ago. On the other hand, Meena, the victim of marital abuse in this relationship no longer fears him. Meena stood there, accepting everything waiting for him to kill her.

### 3.2.2 Pressure from Closest People

To tell other people about Meena's real condition in the relationship with her husband is very burdensome. The fear of getting judged, the fear of getting accused of something that she does not do. However, Meena gathers her courage to tell about her condition to her parents. Meena expect that her parents would stand by her side, knowing well that their daughter has tried her best to be a good wife. "I tell my parents about the violence. I want to leave. I cannot take this anymore. It has only been a handful of months, but I feel defeated." (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 156). Sadly, their response is far from what Meena could have imagined.

*My father on the phone:*

"What is going on? Well, that is common. It is a matter of ego. I know you, you are my daughter, you do not like to lose a fight. The marriage is a give and take. Listen to him. He only means well. Do not raise your voice. Do not talk back. Yes I know. It is difficult. But remember, only if you respond he is going to talk back and things escalate. Silence is a shield and it is also a weapon. Learn how to use it." (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 156 – 157)

The quotation shows how Meena's father seems like he does not want to understand Meena's feelings. Meena was probably talking about her circumstances with her husband, and how she cannot stand for herself. Instead of validating Meena's feelings, he accused her of being stubborn, and not wanting to lose in an argument. Her father also chooses to advise her on what she should have done. Her father demands her to never talk badly about her husband. As her father said that marriage is about give and take, Meena should have been more patient in dealing with her husband. Similar to him, Meena's mother also give the same pressure on Meena. "It hasn't been long at all. The first year is the worst year. Tell me about it. It is maddening, it will drive you to suicide." (Kandasamy,

2020, p. 157). Meena's mother seems like she wants to normalize what her daughter has gone through, that the first year of marriage is the hardest so that Meena could have survived. "All change is slow. A marriage is not magic. You will have to give him time. He will come around." (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 158). Her mother emphasized that the way people change needs time, and her mother told Meena that she should give her husband more time.

*My father on the phone:*

"Yes. Yes. That is not very nice. Listen. Patience. Patience. Tolerance. Just tolerate. This is not a time to be selfish. If you break off your marriage, everyone in town will mock me. They will say his daughter ran away in less than six months. It will reflect on your upbringing. This is not what I intended for my daughter. You have no idea what a father goes through. A father of a daughter that is a special kind of punishment. We pay the price. Please. Think about us this once." (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 158 – 159)

Meena's father is seen to be selfish. He really does not care about what is Meena going through. It seems like he only cares about his reputation, and if Meena decides to end her relationship with her husband it will affect his image. The phrase "We pay the price. Please. Think about us this once," seems like it was intended to put the blame and pressure on Meena. Her father thinks that he has raised her well not to see her own daughter betrayed and embarrassed him. The pressure on Meena as a daughter and a wife was very distressing. "Learn to obey. You can question his decisions later." (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 159). Specifically when she needs reassurance from someone, the emotional support she never had. It is merely understandable that her parents become one of the reasons for her anxiety.

In conclusion, the lack of emotional support, especially from her family raises her feeling of anxiety as she cannot pour her encumbrance and is always being blamed for everything. Not to mention how her parents gave her pressure as if her life is not already tough because she still have to deal with her husband.

Aside from the pressure by her own parents, the external factors causing Meena's anxiety also come from the pressure by her husband. In her relationship with her husband, Meena often feels like she is being owned by her husband. The way she does all things, how she dresses, how she wears her hair, and how she does makeup are all under the pressure of her husband. Becoming a housewife without having any other activity outside makes her realize that being a woman means you do not have control over yourself.

“There are not many things a woman can become when she is a housewife in a strange town that does not speak any of her mother-tongues. Not when her life revolves around her husband. Not when she has been trapped for two months in the space of three rooms and a veranda.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 13)

In the quotation above, it can be seen that Meena feels like her life as a woman is very limited. There is not much a woman can become when she becomes a wife living in a very unfamiliar town. Being isolated while not knowing other people besides her husband, and not knowing the language caused her to feel trapped. Especially when she has to live only to prioritize and satisfy her husband.

“Here, there is more to undo than to do. I begin by wearing my hair the way he wants it: gathered and tamed into a ponytail, oiled, sleek, with no sign of disobedience. I skip the kohl around my eyes because he believes that it is worn only by screen-sirens and seductresses. I wear a dull T-shirt and pajama-booms because he approves of

dowdiness. Or, I wrap myself in an old coon sari to remind me of my mother.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 15 – 16)

Married to a man who pressure her in every aspect of her life has affect Meena to do all things just for her husband. She becomes accustomed to doing everything accordingly to her husband. She styles her hair according to what her husband wants to see, she skips eye makeup because she knows that her husband does not like them, and she chooses her clothing based on her husband's liking. Meena does everything to please her husband and not for herself. As a result, Meena feels like she lost her identity and that she does not have control over her life. “I feel nauseous. I feel robbed of my identity. I’m no longer myself if another person can so easily claim to be me, pretend to be me, and assume my life while we live under the same roof.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 55). Meena feels like she is being robbed by her husband. She already leaves everything behind, letting go of her own life to be a good wife only to receive some more dispossession over what she has left.

### **3.2.3 Meena Being Underestimated**

In her relationship with her husband, Meena often being underestimated by her husband. Her husband feels like she does not have to work as he perceives Meena to have lower intelligence than him. Her husband tend to belittle Meena and perceive her to be incompetent and unintelligent, thus resulting in how he see Meena as someone who is weak, obedient, and dependent on him.

“He knows that my being a writer involves being at the mercy of others, being visible, being remembered at the right time so that someone throws an opportunity my way. In my precarious situation,



when he wants me to cut myself off from Facebook, I know that it is an act of career suicide.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 52)

From the quotation above, it can be seen that Meena’s husband feels like he should end Meena’s career. Her husband thinks that letting Meena work is the same as validating her intelligence, that she is smart, and that she is indeed required to accomplish things. What he does next is cutting off Meena from Facebook; her workplace. Her husband tries so hard to prevent Meena from achieving her career goals as a writer only because he does not want to credit Meena to be on the same level as him.

### **3.2.4 Meena’s Lack of Social Life**

Meena’s husband has limited her way to communicate with her family and friends resulting her in feeling isolated. She does not have someone for her to express her emotions. When she feels sad, worried, terrified, or angry, she just keeps the feelings to herself. “For four months and eight days I had been off every radar. No phone, no email, not even the curated happiness of Facebook.”

(Kandasamy, 2020, p. 217). Meena genuinely does not have someone to whom she can talk to.

“It is my lifeline to the world outside. Since moving to Mangalore, Facebook has transformed into my only remaining professional link. Here, I do not have the circle of artist friends I had in Kerala, I do not have the family networks that I had in Chennai. In this isolation, Facebook helps me promote my work, gives me news, keeps me in the loop of the literary scene, allows me to have an online presence which is pivotal if I do not want to be forgotten in a freelance world.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 52)

Facebook has been a special place for Meena to stay connected with her friends, family, and especially her work. Meena did not realize that she really

needs to always be in touch with people until her husband force her not to. “The loss of telephonic communication doesn’t wound me too much. But what I find impossible to fathom is how I now find myself in the position of having my online freedom curtailed.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 59). It is very distressing for her when all she wanted to do is just communicate and use Facebook as a source of entertainment, but her husband has to take all the little things left for her.

In conclusion, the lack of social life contributes to her anxiety. Being isolated by her husband and how she has limited time to communicate with her friends and family makes Meena frustrated. Living in a new place, and not having anyone she can talk to besides her husband has caused Meena to feel like she is alone. Having someone listening to your problems and taking the role of emotional support is proven to remedy the feeling of anxiety (Reblin & Uchino, 2008). Thus, it can be concluded that having at least one person to whom Meena can talk has helped her to reduce anxiety.

### **3.3 Meena’s Defense Mechanism**

A defense mechanism is a strategy performed by people to reduce the feeling of anxiety. Defense mechanism functions by observing the negative circumstances which can give a bad influence on the human mind. In this novel, Meena as the main character that has gone through unpleasant experiences has naturally performed a defense mechanism to protect herself and to decrease her anxiety. Thus, Meena uses sublimation, reaction formation, isolation, idealization, and fantasy as her defense in the story.

### 3.3.1 Meena's Love of Writing

Meena's love of writing signs that she performs sublimation as a defense mechanism. Meena performs sublimation as her defense mechanism by altering her anxiety into her love to write. Meena has always been dreaming of becoming a writer. So, when she feels like the feeling of anxiety has already dominated her life, she starts to write to reduce the unpleasant feelings.

“...I was writing, I say. More often, I stick to the more modest version: I was trying to write. In the brief pauses between household chores, I would hunt for inspiration on empty pages, on the blank screen of my laptop. That's not work in his dictionary. That is someone doing nothing.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 75)

The quotation shows that Meena writes because she really loves to. Even after a long work of household chores, she would still open her laptop to search for inspiration. Even after her husband tells her that writing is the same as doing nothing. “There is a semblance of respect that comes my way when I'm asked to write for a magazine, ...” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 75). Meena does not care of other people's opinions about her being a writer, what she really thinks is the feeling of pride and glory when someone acknowledges her writing. As a result, Meena always alters her anxiety into writing, even if it means that she has to do it secretly and in a very limited time.

“I snatch every free second I can get over the next two days. I type while I catch water to fill the pots in the house, when I enter the bathroom to wash my hair, when I'm asked to clean the moringa leaves for a soup, when I watch the goat stew simmer over a rewood stove and the smoke sets me coughing, when I babysit my niece and nephew. I learn to compose whole sentences and paragraphs at a stretch in my mind.” (Kandasamy, 2022, p. 76 – 77)

Meena always tries her best to continue to write even under the circumstances that make it hard for her. When she was going to her husband's relatives, she really tried her best to write; when she is busy filling the pots she still tried to write, when it will hard for her to write in the bathroom, when she is asked to clean she still try to write, even when she watches the goat stew or when she babysits her niece, she still composes her mind to make a sentence and paragraph as she really loves to. Writing has become her runaway in achieving emotional peace.

“Open a file, write a paragraph or a page, erase before lunch. The sheer pleasure of being able to write something that my husband can never access. The revenge in writing the word lover, again and again and again. The knowledge that I can do it, that I can get away with doing it. The defiance, the spite. The eagerness to rub salt on his wounded pride, to reclaim my space, my right to write.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 88)

Even in stressful times, Meena always seeks the opportunity to write. For her, writing has become some sort of revenge. She knows that her husband does not like her to write, to be a writer. Thus, she deliberately keeps writing as it will violate her husband and his ego. Moreover, the phrase “...that I can get away with doing it. The defiance, the spite...” emphasizes that writing has become her main source as a defense mechanism to reduce the feeling of anxiety.

### **3.3.2 Meena Acting Contrary from Her True Feelings**

Meena acting contrary from her true feelings sings that she performs reaction formation as a defense mechanism. In her life, Meena uses reaction formation to reduce her anxiety caused by her husband. “As distressed as I am, there's a part of me wanting to laugh.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 51). The reaction

formation as a defense mechanism showed when Meena feels distressful, the trigger inside her does not lead her to cry or be angry but to laugh. She acts contrary to her true feelings because she chooses to laugh over the unpleasant situation in her life. “When something is too obvious, I think the best course of action is to pretend not to notice it at all.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 91). Meena deliberately avoid the negative circumstances by consciously pretending that nothing had happened. Thus, Meena can prevent the feeling of anxiety so that it does not extremely affect her life. Moreover, she also applied the reaction formation when she is dealing with her husband.

“And cut! I am the wife playing the role of an actress playing out the role of a dutiful wife watching my husband pretend to be the hero of the everyday. I play the role with air. The longer I stretch the act of the happily married couple, the more I dodge his anger. It’s not a test of talent alone. My life depends upon it.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 20)

Meena applied reaction formation when she acts to be a good housewife for her husband. “...But I know that ailed in this manner, I am all set to play the part of the good housewife. Nothing loud. Nothing eye-catching.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 16). She consciously and continuously acts contrary to what she really feels. In reality, she feels exhausted from bearing with his behavior. Being abused and manipulated by her husband made Meena wants to end her marriage, but she does not have the courage to make it into reality. Thus, one of the defense mechanisms she can do to deal with her anxiety is by acting contrary to what she really feels.

### 3.3.3 Meena Isolating Her Emotion

Meena isolating her emotion means that she performs isolation as her defense mechanism. "...because every reference to the sad tale of my marriage will be indexed under the responsibility over my own life. I must write my own story." (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 9). When Meena talks about her sad marriage life, she does not involve her emotions, instead, she thinks of the positive side as her chance to take over and take control of her life. Furthermore, dealing with her abusive husband, Meena frequently uses isolation as her defense.

"I do not feel any guilt. I do not think any of his beatings or belt lashings will cause me to feel any guilt. With me, at this moment, I feel only the relish of rebellion, the comfort of long-forgotten words that now make me feel safe, feel loved." (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 97)

Meena does not feel any emotion when she is being abused by her husband. She does not involve her feelings in the situation. The phrase "I feel only the relish of rebellion, the comfort of long-forgotten words that now make me feel safe, feel loved," shows her way of perceiving the situation logically. She does not want to waste her energy on something that will cause her to fall deeply into the feeling of anxiety. So, the role of isolation as a defense mechanism has helped her in blocking negative or personal thoughts while still be able to face the occurrence, thus, it prevents the feeling of anxiety.

### 3.3.4 Meena Overly Idealize Her Husband

Meena who is overly idealize her husband means that she performs idealization as a defense mechanism. The idealization function leads Meena into believing that there is more positive value in her husband. "He can be kind, I

know he can, I've seen how tender he is with the homeless boys in town, but with me, I know that he will always choose to be cruel." (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 138).

Meena certainly knows that her husband is abusive and manipulative. However, to prevent the rising of anxiety in her life, Meena tries to focus only on the good quality of him.

"I fell in love with the man I married because when he spoke about the revolution it seemed more intense than any poetry, more moving than any beauty. I'm no longer convinced. For every genuine revolutionary in the ranks, there is a careerist, a wife-beater, an opportunist, a manipulator, an infiltrator, a go-getter, an ass-licker, an alcoholic and a dopehead." (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 89 – 90)

In the quotation above, Meena is certainly aware of the negative qualities of her husband. Meena chooses to focus on his good quality, as she views him to be someone who is revolutionary and intense while at the same time, she knows that her husband is also someone who has the courage to beat and manipulate his own wife, someone who is an alcoholic and a dopehead. All Meena do was believe that the good qualities of her husband will replace her feeling of anxiety.

"He is the most charismatic politician in the state, the grandson of a revolutionary, the darling of the regional press, the lone crusader, the insider who is dismantling a corrupt system, the dedicated young man who will change the country. This man is all the men I had been looking for." (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 109)

From the quotation above, once again, Meena performs idealization by saying that her husband is the one she is been looking for. She overly searches for the positive qualities in her husband, as it will cover up her feeling of restlessness and discomfort. Thus, idealization works as the main role for Meena to mask her feeling of anxiety.

### 3.3.5 Meena Fantasizing Her Marriage Life

Meena fantasizing about her marriage life signs that she performs fantasy as a defense mechanism. Meena's life has never been easy for her. Suffering from an abusive relationship, having to deal with a manipulator, and being isolated into loneliness. It is understandable if Meena uses fantasy as her defense in reducing the feeling of anxiety.

“On Sundays, we wake up late and stay in bed. In my fantasies of marriage, it is a suspended morning of making love and stepping out to eat an endless, lazy brunch. In reality, my husband goes over the events of the past week to conclude, after an elaborate analysis, that I've done practically nothing at all, and suggests a host of jobs that I should try. He usually sets himself as the stellar example.” (Kandasamy, 2020, p. 78)

Meena performs fantasy as her defense to retreating from the life that she never wants. In the phrase “In my fantasies of marriage, it is a suspended morning of making love and stepping out to eat an endless, lazy brunch,” she imagines how could life will be for her, enjoying Sunday morning with her husband as they eat lazy brunch. However, it all can only be happening inside her mind, in her own fantasy. Meena will never be experiencing the life she wants in reality. So, the role of fantasy as a defense mechanism in Meena's life is to keep her sane by allowing her to imagine the perfect life she always wanted.



## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

*When I Hit You* tells the story of Meena, a young writer who works as a freelancer and is also a housewife. Meena married the man who she thought was the love of her life, a man who is a lecturer and also a politician. The young Meena, who is still naive and not very familiar with the world, is then exposed to the reality of an abusive relationship which caused her to the feeling of anxiety. Following the journey of Meena, this study resulted in the analysis of Meena's anxieties, the factors causing her anxieties, and the performance of defense mechanisms.

This study found that the main character in the novel experiencing three types of anxiety which are neurotic anxiety, moral anxiety, and realistic anxiety. The neurotic anxiety found on the main character in this study is the feeling of tense and restless. In addition, the main character also suffers from moral anxiety. The moral anxiety caused the main character to feel shame, guilty, and worried as she feels that she act contrary from her own value and the social stigma. Moreover, the main character also experiencing realistic anxiety caused by real-life danger. The writer founds that the main character fears of her husband resulted from the marital abuse. The main character fears that the more she goes deep into her relationship, the closer she goes to death. Furthermore, the writer also find four external causing the anxiety the main character in this study, that are marital abuse, pressure from the main character's closest people, being underestimated, and the main character's lack of social life.

In addition, the writer also analyses how the main character in this study deals with the feeling of anxiety through the performance of a defense mechanism. The writer finds out that the main character performed five types of defense mechanisms in order to decrease her anxiety. First, the main character performs sublimation as a defense mechanism that channels her anxiety to other positive things, in this case, the main character alters her anxiety into her love of writing. Second, the main character performs reaction formation by acting contrary from her real feelings. Third, the main character performs isolation as a defense mechanism by blocking the undesirable feelings and emotions so that it does not interfere her life. Fourth, the main character also performs idealization as a defense mechanism to deceive her anxiety by overlooking on the positive qualities of her husband and ignoring his negative side. Lastly, the main character in this study performs fantasy as a defense mechanism by fantasizing her marriage life to retreat her expectations that she cannot make into reality.

UIN SUNAN AMPEL  
S U R A B A Y A

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