



## Contemporaneity of Language and Literature in the Robotized Millennium

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### Feminist Assertions in Kamala Das: A Study of an Introduction & the Sunshine Cat

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#### Abstract

Feminism refers to the questionable position of women in a male chauvinistic society because of the ensuing practices being followed since times immemorial. It basically is the attitude and behavior of men towards women. Feminism in literature also focuses on the suppression of women in a patriarchal culture and the way in which they are treated in the society. Women are always considered as objects of desire fulfillment and enjoyment. The literary feminism is mainly focused on bringing forth the economic, cultural, social and educational inequalities of women in the society which is ruled by the ideologies of men. The female writers through their ardent form of writing present their views on this crucial subject. They express with the help of original writing, bold images, female sexuality and a deep personal tone. Many poets and writers have raised their voice against this social issue through their contemporary way of writing as they wanted to see a transformation in the attitude of men towards women.

**Keywords:** Questionable, chauvinistic, transformation, suppression, patriarchal

#### 1. Introduction

Feminism is not new and the literary movement for the same has been going around in the world of writers. It is a fight of women against the atrocities that men inflict on them under the name of different lame reasons. A woman should be first accepted as a human being and then as an equal partner in all aspects of life, treating them as mere objects is against the human rights of an individual. Their political, cultural, educational and social inequalities should be restored to them and they should be brought to an equal platform which is the same as that for men. Many female writers have been writing about this social evil by using bold statements, pictures and an emphatic way of writing which brings this subject in the forefront. To name a few there are many feminist writers like, Simone de Beauvoir (*The Second Sex*), Betty Friedan (*The Feminine Mystique*), Kate Millet (*Sexual Politics*) and Marry Wollstonecraft (*The Vindication of the Rights of Women*). They all wrote depicting the false principles and ideologies of men towards women and highlighted the importance of their freedom from all these and to show them in a better position eternally. There are two areas in which the literary world was divided and discriminated upon and that were, patriarchal way of thinking and gender bias. The literary arena was ruled and dominated by the male battalion and they gave only alternate or very nominal roles to their female counterparts. These kinds of principles were challenged by the feminists and they wrote to bring about a transformation in the literary world. They exhibited their point of view as a woman in their writing styles and questioned the one-sided examination of the literary work presented. They display all these views through their poems which demanded the attention of the masses on this crucial issue. Though their views grew up from the point of view of a woman but it was a serious concern for everyone. Feminism brought about through in the literary world is a change worth the appreciation of the modern woman. Kamala Das is one of the eminent ones among the feminist writers who presented a straight forward, crystal clear and bold view on the subject of oppression of women by men. She wanted to go against this wave of discrimination against women and reform the ways of the society for the betterment of women. In all her poems, the voice of a conscious woman is dominant. Kamala Das wrote in English as well as in Malayalam her mother tongue. She is well known as Madhavi Kutty to her Malayalam readers and as Kamala Das to her English readers. She earned the title of, the mother of English poetry on account of her extensive contribution to the Indian writing in the postcolonial era. Born in a literary royal family, Kamala Das spent some part of her childhood in her ancestral home in Malabar, Kerala and the other part in Calcutta where her father got posted for work. Even her mother Balamani Amma was a famous poet and her grand Uncle Nalapat Narayana menon a respected writer. She grew up watching her elders full engrossed in their work and started writing at the young age of six. She wrote at this tender age for a manuscript magazine where she penned a few sad poems about dolls without heads and their journey of being headless throughout and her brother will give illustrations for the verses to Kamala Das's poems. Kamala Das was married off at the young age of fifteen to a bank employee and had to move to Bombay with him. Apart from carrying on her duties as a wife and mother she gave wings to her passion of writing. She would finish her daily chores and would write during the night which later affected her health. With her bold poems, she lent her words to the women in that era who are held captive at their own homes. They are treated as a mere good or thing which moves from one household to another in exchange by getting married.

She threw light on the fact that they are humans too with emotions, desires and feelings which should not be ignored by men. In this article, we are going to concentrate on two of her poems which bring out the true essence of feminism.

## 2. Literature Review

An Introduction poem by Kamala Das describes her own mental disposition because of male domination and the way the society is ruled by them. She begins the poem by stating that she is aware about all the male leaders of the country and their specific powers but in contrast she talks about her condition growing up as a powerless woman who is married at the age of sixteen. She talks about how she had to struggle to make her own identification beyond the stature of a wife. Kamala Das says all around the world men are able to carve out an identity for themselves but women are subjected to a condition that they are unable to think or move beyond the limitations of their family. Their world revolves only around the members of the family and in catering to all their needs by playing different roles. Men on the other hand can have their own preferences in all that they do their emotional requisites are given more importance always. In the end, she says that she wants to be an I and does not wish to lose this identity of hers at any cost. In this poem of hers she wishes to talk about freedom of choice for every woman in all aspects of life specifically in marriage. The women readers are provoked to look within themselves and identify their role in the society as well as in the family. She feels that the readers should put these biased questions to their own self and answer with respect to their personal lives. The poem has sixty lines within a single paragraph which do not follow any particular metrical pattern and there is no rhyme scheme too in the poem. Kamala Das wanted the poem to be in free verse to get to the minds of the readers more clearly and with emphasis. The poem clearly expresses the experience of her life which is restricted and an ardent desire which is to live a free life. The poem is the real experience of Kamala Das as a married woman who wishes to be free from the male chauvinistic attitudes and beliefs. In Introduction she portrays the realities of her personal life where she is an innocent girl who is away and unaware of the ways of the crafty world. She is bold enough to quote the instances from her life when she was not even allowed to write in English saying that it is her mother tongue and she was instructed to write in Malayalam her mother tongue. This is a very serious concern because a writer is not able to exercise the right to freedom of expression. Then she was married just because she grew tall and her limbs swelled, a youth of sixteen years of age was there in her bedroom, though he did not beat her but her feminism was overpowered and she felt hurt from within. She felt burdened by her own body weight and felt captivated and imprisoned inside the four walls of a place called home. Her yearning eyes longed for freedom and love which was nowhere found around and showed the sad plight of an Indian woman who got married very early in her life. Women never get love but are forced to receive only sexual exploitation and all kinds of injustices without getting the chance to even speak out their mind. Kamala Das wanted to fight against these attitudes and refused to accept the traditional feminine role. Another poem of hers which is called, the sunshine cat taken from the collection of poems titled Summer in Calcutta, shows the absolute difference between love and lust. The poem shows these differences through personal experiences which is applicable universally. She speaks from the perspective of a woman who is without help and frustrated surviving in the society dominated by men. The opening lines of the poem sadly depict the fatal implications of lust which never culminate into a fruitful relationship. Most of the relations are based on lust only and men seldom have any respect or love for their female counterparts. A relation which springs out of love can only lead to satisfaction and fulfillment in the emotional and spiritual levels. The poem brings out the real predicament of a lonely woman who is yet to find real love in the world. Everyone exploited and used her in the name of love which was not love but only lust and among them she gives specific reference to a person whom she loved deeply but could get nothing from him. Everything was superficial without any real essence of love. She narrated the unfortunate status of a woman where the spouse overlooked her emotional needs and looked only at the satisfaction of his lustful desires. Her husband was also a coward besides being selfish. He never loved her and witnessed the close relation of hers with other men without getting affected by the same. He never had an emotional or true relationship with her and came to her only for personal gratification. Kamala Das shows through her bold words that marriage is a one-sided relation which is dominated by men who just think about their desires and ignore the other person's fulfillment and desires. It talks about a momentary satisfaction only which is not even from both partners. When in love both the partners get not only physical satisfaction but also spiritual and emotional fulfillment. The poem describes the confessions of an unsatisfied woman who is trapped in a loveless and meaningless relationship. The woman in the poem is suspected of having affairs with other men by her husband who is ignorant of her feelings as he does not love her. Every man approached the woman in question only with lust and personal demands overlooking her sensualities as a woman. After all these humiliating experiences, she comes inside her room to relax and surrounds herself by endless tears and thinks that she could go mad in such a state of mind. She has come to a state where she is all alone and feels dejected and cheated under the pretext of love. When subjected to frustration in the name of love the woman finds a vacuum in her life which is hard to be filled with any kind of feeling. On account of the disastrous marital and extra-marital relationships the woman loses all interest in life and reaches a position of isolation and detachment. The poem is an autobiography from the personal account of Kamala Das's life after marriage.

## 3. Conclusion

Kamala Das stands as a solid foundation to break apart the beaten track and come out in the open about what is being happening behind the close doors of the Indian household. Her writings are full of bold messages and a distinct way of writing that it shakes the roots of Indian writing in English. Her mature way of writing puts back life into the corpus of the literary world. Her writing is so very intense and portrays the agonizing self in a way that it makes the reader ponder and self examine the way deep into his or her personal life. The male chauvinistic attitude portrayed mostly in all her work questions the status of every woman in all the Indian households. Her originality and sensibility shows the suffocating scenario of a matriarchal bondage which could not be broken in any way. All her work shows that men always depict their emotions as a social opinion and get them fulfilled at any cost and a woman's opinions are not even considered. Kamala Das questions that why should

women be directed or instructed to do things always and why can't they have their own way and exercise their rights as an individual for life. The dos and don'ts are prescribed only for a woman in the society and not for men. Since ages and years men have taken the way forward and a woman has to fit in any of the roles that are determined by men. There is no one to challenge or ask questions to men and there are numerous men to question and put women in line with the conditions laid down by men. A woman should not have a say or desire and even she has it should be destroyed at the very beginning and she should be ready to get molded in any way that is being created by the men in the society. A woman whether before or after marriage should always wait for the men in the family to decide for her, all these existing realities and more were brought to the forefront by Kamala Das and many such warriors of the literary world who wanted to see a change in the way a woman is being treated by her spouse and the family members. Unfortunately after putting in so much through her melancholic tone Kamala Das could not experience any transformation in the real life and was forever cheated and taken for granted in the relationships. The attempt in this paper to understand the agonies of an Indian woman through the writing of Kamala Das and also trace the way she puts forth the issue with real life examples of her life. Her voice is true and authentic which makes the social issue presentable, measurable and emphatic to the understanding of the world in general and women readers in particular. Kamala Das through her explicit writing wishes to unlock the doors to see a woman free from the entangled chains of sexual and domestic oppression eternally.

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