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# Feminism In The Writings Of Kamala Das

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## ABSTRACT

There is a feminist viewpoint in Kamala Das' poetry "The Old Playhouse," and that is what this paper is all about. An oppressive patriarchal society, gender stereotypes, and a need for personal space and creativity are all depicted by this poem, which depicts the voice of a female speaker who expresses these feelings through her own self-expression. An intellectual space is needed to follow a woman's goals and to objectify a woman who has been confined in the four boundaries of her home and ignored by the male-dominated society in which she lives. This is seen in Das. The poetry provides as a voice for the woman's innermost feelings, which go unnoticed in a patriarchal culture.

**KEYWORDS:** Patriarchal society, stereotyping, woman, gender and oppression.

## INTRODUCTION

Though her poetry has been categorized as personal or feminist, Kamala Das's work may just as well be referred to as the poetry of resistance. There are several poems in which she reveals how she was unable to find true love in her marriage, how she tried to find it by having sexual connections with other men, and how love became a "swivel-door" with one lover exiting and another entering her bedroom. The poetry of protest that Kamala Das writes in this confessional form shows her passionate and ardent dissatisfaction of the way Indian women have been treated for millennia.

A defender of women's rights and a staunch supporter of the struggle to free women from the shackles of servitude to males, Kamala Das may be considered by some to be an inspiration. Women's liberation was still in its infancy when Kamala Das composed these poems (in the 1960s and 1970s of the twentieth century), but the movement's current success has surpassed even the most optimistic predictions of its founders.

When Kamala Das penned her poems, Indian women were still obedient to their parents or husbands; the idea of having an extramarital relationship was unheard of. Today, Indian women enjoy the same level of liberation as their counterparts in the United Kingdom and the United States. Kamala Das was one of the first prominent women to call for such liberation, and she was also one of the very few to achieve it and use it to its best extent.

Feminist prescriptions have included many more inscriptions like these. Other perspectives on feminism can also be explored to better comprehend the feminist literature that extended and dealt with so many different parts of a woman's existence. A woman's ability to accomplish the same task as a male was recognized as a result of feminism. Instead, according to noted feminist scholar and author Linda Gordon, "feminism is the study of women's subordination to determine how it might be changed."

Feminism is interpreted differently in different nations and by different people, such as the diverse feminist theory of the American, French, Canadian, African, and Indian critics.

French women want more sexual perspicuity, American women want more political and democratic freedom, and Indian women want equal social, economic and political independence. In her book, Elaine demonstrates changes. Women's writing is a "subculture" defined by the establishment of three terms: "Feminine," "Feminist," and "female," which are used to describe the tradition. The play alters the famous distinction between the feminine internalization phase, the feminist uprising phase, and the female self-discovery and rehabilitation phase. All three stages are thought to be more emancipated than their predecessors while still maintaining their particular identity as female writers.

Feminism's first and most fundamental goal was to establish that women are not just an extension of men, but are in fact distinct beings with their own distinct identities. It was the younger brother of French playwright Alexander Dumas who coined the name "Feminism" in 1872 for the then-emerging feminist movement. Since the beginning of the 20th century, women's demands for equality with males have been a constant topic in Western society. Big Ails Adams wrote to her husband John, a sitting member of the Continental Congress, and warned him not to allow her husband such unrestricted authority.

It is not merely a byproduct of the Western feminist movement that feminism has taken root in India. The Dawn's origins in India are also credited to the fact that Indians gained their freedom and had a new sense of self-awareness as a result. This is the crux of feminism in Indian literature: Indian women divided between tradition and modernity, torn between their own aspirations and those of the future. When it comes to her novel, Sushilast's interpretation is as follows:

feminism and contemporary literature in English. If you're going to discuss feminism as an ideology and as a critical tool, you need to keep in mind that it can take on numerous forms depending on race, class, and culture.

Until the late nineteenth century, the masculine had long held sway over the literary world. Women writers, both in India and around the world, were instrumental in challenging this predominance beginning in the early twentieth century. Until then, the literature published by males about the ideas and dilemmas of women was equivalent to a masculine knowledge. Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own storey, as Elizabeth Eliot notes in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*. A greater level of education has been available to them: "The pen is in their hands."

As a result of this, the image of women has been distorted and distorted. In 1913, a new generation of women began a movement for women's independence. The literary world has been forever changed by the contributions of women writers. It is impossible to define the works of these female authors in a single sentence. There are numerous theological, historical, and cultural influences in their writings. It contains works of art in a wide range of genres, including novels, short stories, epics, poems, plays, and essays, to name just a few examples.

Feminist literature was inspired by the desire to reclaim women's place in society to explore formerly male-dominated territories. In the early 20th century, feminists like Virginia Woolf and Simone De Beauvoir penned works like *A Room of One's Own* and *Le Deuxieme sexe*, in which they argued for the eradication of the "myth of the eternal feminine," respectively. As a foundational work of feminist writing, it has inspired a number of female authors. Betty Friedan's "The Feminine Mystique" and Kate Millet's "Sexual Politics" are two more volumes in the series. This is only a sampling of the numerous feminist writers who have spoken out about the importance of feminist literature.

Postcolonial Indian women's status and place in Indian society are much less clear than they were in previous decades. New-age Indian women have attractive, sophisticated faces that conceal a wealth of fears and concerns. Because she has broken free from the long-standing social norms of domestic slavery and subservience, she has become an active participant in society. The breeder-feeder stereotype has finally been broken, and she is now venturing into traditionally male-dominated areas of public life. She has been exposed to a variety of risks, including exploitation, sexual harassment, physical and mental abuse, as a result of her decision to leave her family.

At first, her problems were confined to those within her own family, but as soon as she left the safety of her own home, she was forced to confront those of the outside world. In any sector where women are equal to males, there is a constant presence

of antagonistic conduct against women. Her fears and anxieties, which she had previously kept private and confided in her family, have grown as she has been forced into the spotlight. In today's world, she faces new difficulties, but they come with bigger dangers. Today's woman faces more physical and psychological violence, both within and outside of the home, than in previous generations ever has. Rape, molestation, eve-teasing, and other forms of physical and psychological abuse are on the rise, according to the data.

Many laws have been put in place to protect and defend her, but she is frequently denied justice.

Indian English feminist writing thus took on the task to address all of these different difficulties and problems faced by women to generate social revelation and find remedies. Several woman writers have been successful in their endeavors in this field. Feminist movements in the west originated with the realization of the methods used to oppress women and keep them subordinate to men. They were aimed at this realization. As a result of this movement, it became clear that women's issues and concerns must be seen in a broader context. Feminist literature was born as a result of this revolutionary feminist movement. Indian women were not unaffected by this movement and its influence may be felt in the writings of numerous Indian women writers.

Many of India's female writers may feel the influence of tradition on their work. Traditional images of women affected the female characters in Indian English fiction. Literature has been replete with magical realism depictions that have permeated, dominated, and influenced it. Overshadowing the literary legacy in India is the traditional, suffering ideal of female gender. This depiction persisted in a society accustomed to seeing virtuous women devoted to their spouses and families in religious art. A prominent ideal for women in India and Indian fiction is the Sita-Savitri figure.

The short tales of three significant women writers, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, and Kamala Das, are examined in order to better comprehend feminist shifts in Indian English writing. The stories written by these women writers cover a wide range of subjects impacting Indian womanhood, from the physical to the psychological. A wide variety of female characters, ranging from those who quietly carry out the principles of the legendary image of woman, to those who openly challenge the archetype in an effort to break away from it, are featured in this collection. Feminist literature is so rich and varied that it's impossible to sum it all up in a single definition. It would be difficult to distinguish and characterize the writing practices of women writers.

During the post-independence era in India, Kamala Das (1934-2009) was a poet, novelist, and short story writer. Women's subjugation in patriarchal society, male

supremacy, self-expression, gender stereotypes, and other issues are all addressed in the poem. 'The Old Playhouse' is a poem that reflects feminist views on the patriarchal culture. The speaker compares her inner mind to the abandoned playhouse, which has been left to its own devices in a male-dominated world. For this paper, we will examine the concept of gender construction in society, and the responsibilities that are assigned to a certain gender. The influence of oppression on a woman's mental consciousness will be better understood through this paper's study. Women who are oppressed often feel alone, detached, and abandoned.

The old Playhouse" tackles the tyranny of the speaker in a patriarchal society where the speaker likens a lady "swallow" to a bird that is being planned to be "tamed" by her lover. The term "tame" in the poem is a bold representation of captivity and control that the speaker screams out to highlight the lover to be subjugated while caging her "nature, the longing to fly, and the endless/Pathways of the sky". A man's superiority and disregard for a woman's desire to follow her ambitions are suggested by these lines.

## **LITREATURE REVIEW**

**Midhuna M Suresh (2021)** Feminism and ecology are well-known topics in literary and cultural studies. Despite this, it has only been in the last 50 years that Indian literature has begun to explore Eco feminism. Ecology and feminist theory are combined in eco feminism. Essay about Sugathakumari and Kamala Das two famous Indian poets who have battled tirelessly for gender equality and environmental preservation. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine their writings as unashamed political commentary on women and nature via the lens of Eco feminism.

**Haydor Uddin (2020)** Kerala-born Kamala Das has been hailed as the "mother of modern Indian English poetry" and "confessional poet." She was born March 31, 1934, in Punnayukulam in Kerala's Thrissur District. Indo-Anglican poets, she was one of the most innovative. As an Indian English poet, she rose to the top of the ranks. And her poetry is regarded as a form of self-reflection and self-analysis. She undoubtedly earned a name for herself as a female Indo-Anglican poet. To be sure, she has reached greatness as a poet due to both the content of her poems and her style of poetry writing. Moreover, it would not be an exaggeration to say that she was a voice for Indian females. Craftsmanship has made her a well-known figure in the industry. This study was an attempt to show the magnificence of Kamala Das and the literary style she possessed. That's not all: This article focuses on how she presented herself honestly and without hesitation in her writings, particularly with regard to gender roles. Secondary sources were utilized in this study.

**ANUPAMA PADHI (2020)** For Indian women English poets, Kamala Das is the pioneering champion of feminist literature. In the midst of a patriarchal world

controlled by men, she bravely laid the causes of women's terrible experiences with her own identity. When it comes to the exploitation of women in society, she uses poems in English to show how it has been since she was a youngster. She has the audacity to portray a woman as a human being with the full range of normal sexual desire. As a "loud poster" for women's issues, she speaks out in support of the causes she believes in. All of Kamala's frank expressions come off as shocking in that context. She does not disguise herself or hide her identity, and she depicts the women's plights in her poems with her subjective "I" as the principal character, which is even more startling. This study examines the debate over how she presents herself as "I" in her poetry.

**Dr. R. Bakyaraj (2018)** Feminist is a complex term that cannot be summarized in a single sentence. To put it another way, it's safe to say that the term "feminism" hasn't been defined precisely. To summaries, there is no single name or description for feminism, and Alice Jar dine expresses this beautifully. In a broader sense, however, it is a deliberate act of defiance against patriarchal exploitation in all its forms, as well as an attempt to reclaim a sense of female self-worth and identity that has been lost to the passage of time. Feminism can be understood as an attempt to include the category of "being" known as "woman" in the umbrella of universal human nature, so making them eligible for human rights. The title of MARY WOLLSTONECRATT's book, a defense of the Rights of Woman, may have made this very argument clear. Feminism, on the other hand, aims to put women in the same category as the rest of the human race, not as an object or a relative reality of men. As such, feminism asserts that women are entitled to the same rights and privileges as all other human beings, and that they should not be treated as a distinct group.

## **FEMINISM**

“There is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can lay against the independence of my intellect. (Woolf, 76) Feminism is a movement which strives to define and create social, legal and cultural freedom and equality of women. Gender equality is at the foundation of feminist movement: it defends women’s rights on the premise of equality of sexes in all domains of life. Feminism, as a literary movement, strives to protest against the patriarchal culture which connects male with superiority, strength, activity, self-assertion and control; and feminine with inferiority, weakness, passivity, obedience and self-negation. Feminism aspires to emancipate women from the bonds of servitude and domesticity. By showing domestic abuse, sexual harassment, male ego, etc., in their works the Feminist authors stress and denounce the situation of women in the patriarchal society and so strive to foster a feeling of rebellion and self-identity in them. Robert Webb explains feminism in the following terms: “Feminism isn’t about hating males. It’s about confronting the ludicrous gender disparities that boys and girls acquire from infancy and take into their adult lives. Feminist literature stresses and opposes the disparities and

injustices in the treatment of women- the difficulties women have to suffer on account of their gender.” (Kumar, 9). Feminism, as a sort of resistance against patriarchal preconceptions and bigotry, can be found in most of her poetry. Her poem *The Old Playhouse* is crucial for the topic of feminist strain in her poetry. It is a typical feminist poetry written by Kamala Das. In *The Old Playhouse*, Kamala Das not only illustrates the trials and miseries of a married woman bound to her husband’s home but also revolts against the male rule. The poem is a call to arms for all women against the male ego:

“You wanted to train a swallow and keep her as your pet. So that she wouldn't forget you over the long summer of your love. Her character, her desire to soar, and the infinite vistas of the sky are not the only things that compelled her to flee” (*The Old Playhouse*, 1)

Women's suffering as wives, who are expected to fulfil certain traditional responsibilities while also having their own desires and goals ignored, is the focus of this poetry. As Kamala Das shows in her poetry, patriarchal society is harsh and empty. The next words of the poem beautifully illustrate the plight of women in a patriarchal culture:

"You called me wife, I was instructed to break saccharine into your tea and to provide the vitamins at the correct moment, terrified behind your gigantic ego I ate the magic loaf and became a dwarf. When I couldn't muster the will or the rationale, I murmured my answers to all of your questions.” (*The Old Playhouse*, 1)

## **KAMALA DAS AS POET**

Women are portrayed as toys in her poems, and she expresses her own self-deprecation. The female form appears in her work as a skeletal skeleton. A woman's ideas and feelings have been effectively conveyed by Kamala Das in her portrayal of a woman's mind and emotions. Poet of love Kamala Das is the best. Throughout her poems, she expresses her frustration at not being able to have a happy relationship, whether it be within or outside marriage. Her definition of love encompasses not just physical but also emotional and spiritual satisfaction, which she seeks in a partner. CN Srinath says, "Kamala Das's fundamental preoccupation is her fixation with love desire, true love, and love on multiple dimensions."

The poet's preoccupation with the subject of the body is an obvious consequence of this. Despite her admiration for the human body, she sees it as a tool of oppression and exploitation because of her history of abusive relationships. Kamala Das has a large number of poems on love and desire in her collection. In several of her poems, the fight between the body and the spirit is a recurring theme. Women's natural attraction to men, their desire for a holy and perfect love that

transcends sex, and their disappointment that men are solely interested in her body all play a role in Kamala Das's poetry. Female experience of emotional shock from a bad marriage, humiliation from desire-less submission in sex, and her contempt at male dominance are all reflected in her poems. The ladies of India's society are all represented in Kamala's work. When she says, "I am every woman who desires love," she means it. (Summer in Calcutta :60)

When it comes to feminism and women's roles in society, Kamala Das has been an outspoken critic of the patriarchal forces that force women into stereotypical roles. She is also an Indian English writer who has taken on the critics of the literary world, expressing her displeasure with the way they treat her work. Kamala Das expresses her displeasure with the suffocating nature of the male ego. She talks about the closeness she had with her grandfather and her grandmother. He seemed to have all the trappings of royalty, even if his wealth was limited: Her uncle's wife was supposed to show him some sycophancy, according to her aunt. My grandaunt had a hookah next to his chair, which she scrupulously cleaned each morning. (Firestone !167)

Poetry by Kamala Das also highlights the resentment of women against male superiority and ego when she associates love with sexual relationships or a need that hasn't been realized. She has spoken up on love and desire in a variety of ways. Some women believe that their passions are a waste of time, and they want to be freed from this "soul-eating burden," says Kamala. Is this contentment, buried under a man, for you, woman? It's time to re-emerge into action. Six feet isn't the limit of what the world has to offer. (Iyer : 145)

## **CONCLUSION**

Overall, Kamala Das is a fantastic poet. In many ways, she was a role model for other young women. She was fearless, unafraid, and bursting with creative energy, as seen by the masterpieces she produced. Indian-Anglican poets will always remember her work. She has paved the way for female poets in India to follow in her footsteps. Women's oppression is well-documented in our patriarchal culture, as seen by the poet's work, which clearly portrays the inner voice of women. She exposed the savagery of men's treatment of women. Additionally, her writing style is exuberant and magnificent, allowing her to convey her thoughts and feelings in a straightforward manner. It's safe to say that she was one of the greatest and most creative poets of the 20th century. When she's at her peak, she's unmatched and unassailable. She has an impressive mastery of the English language and a writing style that is marked by brevity and clarity. She is able to express herself with ease. She is able to communicate her emotions, sentiments, reminiscences, love and sexual encounters, disappointments and disillusionment in English because it is the language she is most comfortable with. She was a poet whose work will live on



in the hearts of readers for generations to come. We've lost a revolutionary leader and voice of our time.

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