
A Thematic Study of Kamala Das's Poetry from the Perspective of Revolt against Patriarchy

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Abstract:

Indo-Anglican poet Kamala Das protested against the prevalent systems of the Society. Her offended feminine self-went on emotional wanderings attempting to explore identity and freedom for her own and the whole of women's creed. Her sympathetic understanding and explication revelation of the problem of Indian women, in general, make her a feminist. She is catapulted into a series of situations where she becomes merely a puppet in the hands of male domination. Being bold, she protested and expressed her frustrations, rancor, and loneliness through poetry. Her poems epitomize the dilemma of the modern Indian woman who attempts to free herself sexually and domestically from the role bondage sanctioned by the patriarchal Society. Thus, the voice of Kamala Das for finding her own identity becomes the voice of women for seeking better living conditions and equal human rights for themselves.

Keywords: Feminist, Disposition, Infuriated, Sensibilities, Protest, Freedom.

In post-modern literature, Kamala Das retained a significant position as a rebel against the tradition of Marginalization of women in Indian Society. She is widely praised as a revolutionary poetess for having raised in poetry her voice against patriarchal dominance, which is the main factor of subordination of women to men in Indian Society. In order to demolish this citadel of the age-old tradition of patriarchal supremacy over a matriarchal section of Society, Kamala Das exploited her talent as a poetess to denounce overtly in her poems the tradition.

That empowered the male to subject the women to show their lower status to men. Since she started writing as a Rebel in favor of Indian women and against male dominance, her voice tone and terror became predominantly feministic. In poem after poem, Kamala Das has candidly and clearly expressed her anger and reaction against the patriarchal superiority and dominance that begot sex discrimination and led to the Marginalization of women in their social, cultural, and familial relationships.

In most of her poems, Kamala Das has portrayed herself as a frustrated woman in love in her marital and extramarital life. She attributes her disillusionment and disappointment in

love to male Ego and superiority. She criticizes her husband for insincerity in love and indifference to her inner urge. As she describes in her poems, her husband and her lovers are equally selfish, lust, hunger, and above all, they are betrayers. Kamla Das accuses them of having sexual desire only for the fulfillment of sex, and hence they are cruel and pitiless in depriving a woman of pure love, which she wishes for. Her accusation is justified in as much as a male poet like Prithvi Nandi views women as a source of temporary pleasure. The following lines have been given below:

"Whenever you move under me,
your body celebrates this beautiful
ceremony."

To Kamla Das, her husband is no different from another man. He represents the entire male section of the Society. Hence she writes:

He is very man who wants his

The woman just as I am, every woman
who seeks love

In him, the hungry haste of the river. In
me, the oceans

Tireless Waiting (An Introduction)

In the poem "The, Freaks," she points out
the sterility of the hearts of all men:

The hearts are like empty cisterns
Waiting through long hours fills itself
with cooling snakes of silence.

In contrast to her contemporary poetesses like Gauri Deshpande, Monika Verma, and Mamta Kaliya, Kamla Das has been rebellious against the male section of Society for the emotional and psychological torture inflicted on her by her husband in marital life and by lovers in an extramarital relationship. This frequent betrayal by men and her agony from such cruelty has been described nicely. In this context of Kamla Das's anger and reaction against a male section of Society, Shrinivas Iyengar writes, "Kamla Das is a fiercely feminine sensibility that dares without inhibition to articulate the hurts it has received in an intensive largely man-made World" (680).

Kamla Das hates marriage as it subjects a woman to serve her husband as an enslaved person. She considers marriage a chastisement and gives events to her reaction in her work *From a Writer's Diary*. "Perhaps my marriage was meant to be a chastisement to remove kinks from my personality" (26). She treats it as a game of cruelty. Her female Ego is invulnerable to male dominance. So, she raises a voice of protest, sharply defining the chasm between two worlds, one masculine and the other female. In India, there is a willing resignation of women to male subordination. They have accepted this subjugation as a traditional heart of the Hindu Society due to their tolerance and patience and the sense of slavery as Indian women maintain harmony, order, and sanctity in a family.

After the birth of feminism in India around 1980, Indian women began to claim their independence and individual rights in the family and Society under the influence of this new concept called feminism. In order to awaken the Indian women from their old slumber. Kamala Das begins writing poetry, and her *My Story* is outstanding. In an interview, Kamala Das stated the purpose of her writing *My Story* frankly:

I needed to disturb Society out of its complacency. I found the complacency a very ugly state. I wanted to make women of my generation feel that if men could do something wrong, they could do it themselves too. I wanted them to realize that they were equal; I wanted to remove gender differences (5)

When Kamala Das embarked upon her poetic career Women's Liberation Movement had not emerged in India. However, it had already gained ground in America, Australia, England, and other Nations. The time was unfavorable for launching such moments in a country like India. The Society in which Kamala Das was born and brought out was a patriarchal male-dominated Society that had marginalized Indian women. At that time, women were considered to follow the order of their husbands. Every woman had to abide by a rigid code of conduct. It was considered immoral to speak or write about love and sex. Indian women have a unique identity for their qualities of submissiveness, passivity, tolerance, and compromise. In

this regard, Victor S.D. Souza rightly observes:

One may say that unity and integrity of the joint family are maintained through the subordination of women by men. In fact, according to the traditional Hindu code, women is always deemed to be inferior to man, first to their father, then to their husband, and finally to their son. (32)

In America, feminism was not supported by the majority of women, but it was strange to confess that Americans had to write poems and novels from the feminist perspective. Sylvia Plath raised their voice against male dominance in her poem *Lady Lazarus*. A Canadian writer, Margaret Atwood, is concerned about the Marginalization of women as a strong supporter of women's Liberation Movements. In one of her articles, she writes: "Women are still expected to be better than men. Morally, that is even by women and some branches of the women's movement. (25).

Kamla Das's autobiography *My Story* is a revolutionary approach with a feminist perspective. She has dealt with all those problems confronting the male-dominated Society of India. She draws our attention to the power imbalance in sexual relationships. Animal-like cheating of marriage and sexual exploitation of poor, illiterate women workers. In her poems, she has pointed out how women feel choked and stifled in a man world:

Even the air conditioners help so little all-pervasive is the male scent of your breath (The Old Playhouse)

Kamla Das has depicted the man and woman relationship in her autobiography My Story does not show how men and women as partners in a game. They are instead found as victims and victimizers in their relationship. So she blames the woman for their submission before male Dominated Society. My Story is a critique of the sex-gender system. Since sex, gender is characterized by the biological phenomenon. It can be changed by Society by way of a revolution. She, therefore, contemplates a radical change in women's position through social awareness. Women in India mostly feel like Sylvia Plath, who said, "Being born a woman is my tragedy." Such a feeling of Plath is undoubtedly an outcome of her frustration, suffering, and agony in a hostile world that belongs to men. In a male-dominated society, women are considered an object of accessories to men. Kamla Das refers to how Virginia Woolf was not allowed to enter Oxford Library simply because she was a woman. This is an example of sex discrimination and Marginalization of women worldwide.

Given the subordinate position of women in India, Kamala Das Wanted to create awareness among men through her writings that gender discrimination is a social phenomenon. Women should be treated as equal to men and not as victims. The two sexes should be treated

as two aspects of a coin. Kamala Das protests not only the power politics in a sexual relationship but also against women's condition and their willing submission to Society. In this context, Jill Johnston comments,

"Passivity is the Dragon every woman has to murder in her quest for independence."

It is this dragon that Kamala Das tried to kill by writing her autobiography.

Kamla Das writes in her My Story that although it was a male-dominated Society, women believed that men ought to be superior. This traditional concept existing in the mind of Indian women disgusted Her so much that she wanted to dismantle the past to rebuild a new world based on Justice and equality between the two sexes. Kamala Das, as Rebel, gave a clarion call to women to attempt self-understanding and self Discovery which means self-definition that women are the accurate self-definition that women as a whole can understand the definition of Justice to women by men as biased and partial. They have to seek their identity through self-realization of injustice.

Thus, a study of Kamala Das's poems and autobiography leads us to recognize her significant role as a Rebel for her selfless dedication to the struggle against women's Marginalization and victimization. Her literary venture was deliberately and wholeheartedly designed for women's emancipation, upliftment,

and empowerment. Her writings can be known as feministic in theme design and tone. Her poems present her fearless voice in condemning the inequalities and injustice in the treatment of Society towards women. The poetess, as an individual woman, tried to voice a universal womanhood and tried to share her experiences in her search for female identity, and the identity consists of polarities. She has pictured the women demanding equal social status and even voiced her emotional demands. She denigrated the tradition-bound, conservative Society, which was always harsh on her conventional lifestyle.

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