

Womanhood As Contrasted To Feminism In The Works of Kamala Das

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Abstract: Literature serves as a medium for honest self-expression for women. Women find literature the most expressive form of art which is true to women's experiences. Literature emerging out of female impulses helps to achieve cultural androgyny. It attempts to create a new social order founded on humanistic values. It provides role-models which instill a positive sense of feminine identity. Literature that depicts female characters involved in activities which are traditionally not feminine hastens the dissolution of rigid sex roles. It provides a new sense of community, a sisterhood, fostered on female-female relationships. It helps in consciousness-raising. Literature achieves this by providing realistic insights into the female world and into the psychological and physical aspects of womanhood. Feminist literature, which appeals to the common feelings of insignificance and alienation of women, offers solutions to women's problems. She is often ignored and her creative talents are seldom recognized. The female writers think and feel alike the world over. They depict and offer solutions to the problems of life from a female point of view. Feminist scholarship originates and participates in the larger efforts of feminism to liberate women from the structures that have marginalized women. Major portions of literature have been written from the male point of view either by ignoring or suppressing woman's point of view or else by subverting it intentionally. Feminists examine experiences of the women from all races, classes and cultures. The traditional images of women as an evil force, a temptress, an inferior being, and as an impediment in man's spiritual path have been totally discarded in favour of a more human, egalitarian image mainly due to the efforts of the feminists and the male humanists. Kamala Das is one of the most popular poets of India who have gained space even in the West. As a feminist, she attacks the convention-ridden society. Her attacks on senseless restrictions and conventions plead for the liberation of her sisterhood.

Keywords: Literature Serves as a Medium for Honest Self-Expression for Women. Feminists Examine Experiences of the Women from All Races, Classes and Cultures.

I. INTRODUCTION

Gender Studies investigates the actual (physical and biological) gender differences between women and men, but thinks especially critical about what these differences mean in a socio-cultural context. Gender is a classifying principle in society and culture. It is a remarkable discriminating tool in the distribution of labour, care, possession, income, education, organizational qualities or diseases. Opinions about what is male and what is female colour material and immaterial human products, from clothes and computer design to the image of god and mythology. Social and cultural gender patterns are internalized to an extent where our self-image is partially determined by the fact that we are male or female. Academic scholars who do research on people or their products cannot neglect gender. A woman writer feels artistic creation as a form of violation, resulting in destruction of the female body.

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In women's writing sexuality is identified with the female body in literature (Kumar 12-13) A woman writer is unique both in the selection of theme and in its formal rendering. This uniqueness is the outcome of the conflicting process to which she is subject the process of being and becoming a woman. Women's literature is expressively different from general literature. A woman writer remains anxious to reveal the truth about her womanly experiences and writer about her deepest response.

Women's literature, which has evolved out of women's identity struggles, creates a new awareness in men and women. This has to be distinguished from feminist literature which expresses the shared experiences of women's oppression. Feminist literature highlights and condemns the inequalities and injustices in the treatment of women, the disadvantages women have to bear on account of their gender. As it aims at improving the situation of women, feminist literature is invariably aligned with political interests. By exhorting women to political action and by helping in consciousness-raising, feminist literature seeks to influence public opinion in order to change women's situation. Feminist literature is geocentric: its emphasis is on the ideology rather than on the literariness of the text. Women's literature need not be overtly ideological: its stress can be on the literary merit of the text.

II. DISCUSSION

Women's writing now constitutes a powerful articulation of the gender-specific concerns of women, whose explicit self-identification as an oppressed group has been accepted by critics and cognoscenti. Women's literature has to be contradistinguished from Feminist literature. Women's literature which results out of women's identity struggles creates new awareness in men and women whereas feminist literature expresses the shared experiences of women's oppression. "Feminist literature highlights and condemns the inequalities and injustices in the treatment of women—the disadvantages women have to bear on account of their gender" (Kumar, N. Prasantha. Writing the Female: A Study of Kamala Das. Kochi, Bharatiya Sahitya Pratishthan, 1998, P. 9). Its emphasis is on the ideology rather than on the literariness of the text. Feminism evolved as an opposition to patriarchy or the dominant sexist ideology.

The mystique of a feminine fulfillment emanating from wifehood and womanhood remains a threat to the female writer who strives to express her true self. "A woman writer has to fulfill the cultural expectations of womanhood as well as her own aspirations to become a writer." (Pope, p. 3).



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The dominant conflict in the writer's psyche is between the domestic woman and the creative artist. This conflict is the most productive source of disturbance which inspires her writings.

A woman's point of view is given importance in their works and expression of women's inner-self is an important medium of their works. They do not want to express through the prism set by the outer social codes. This consciousness is mainly associated with what a woman really is and not with what a woman should be as per social system. Their restlessness as sensitive women moving in the male-dominated society is reflected through their works.

The art of a woman writer arises from romance, real or imaginary. She becomes her own heroine. She acts the diabolical role of a witch and risks a figurative death. Her personality undergoes a metaphoric extinction in her construction of an artful mask. She is conscious of herself as a subject, a speaker, assertive and authoritative, and radiant with powerful feelings. In women's literature there is an identification of the writer as the protagonist and as the oppressed female. In the case of many women writers their writings have the status of an autobiography in which the female speaker is the authoritative subject and usually the author in disguise. It needs to be remembered that poetry written by women need not be viewed only as feminist poetry. In fact the belief that one is a woman is almost as absurd and obscurantist as the belief that is a man. However, literature by women tends to get marginalized because of the disparate tendencies of reception to their writings. In writing and particularly in writing poetry women is allotted personal but not public space, a private but not a political or rhetorical voice. Women poets have often raised their voice against social and cultural conventions that constrained their freedom and perpetrated a sort of institutional subjection of women. Women writers assert that the creation of a community of women is necessary antidote to the excess of individualism. They believe that women need to explore their collective consciousness and shared experience in order to transcend the fragmentation and isolation of their lives.

With regards to the new trends and techniques in women's poetry there is a remarkable movement connecting the domestic with the public spheres of work. Increased metropolitan activities, sophisticated life styles, globalization, urbanized influences of pop, disco and cafe culture, Anglo-Americanization and the public and convent education of the present generation of women poets have made their poetic language, chiseled, sharp, pithy and effortless. The deconstructive strategies of narrative and conceptual frames, along with the simultaneous assimilation of pan-Indian elements have made their poetry a formidable area of study and research. Other than the skillful use of standard poetic devices, the semiotic, symbolical and metaphorical properties of language help to emphasize the feminist strategies of interrogation. The fissures and fragments of post-modern life are questioned and reflected in the highly experimental diction. The problems of sociological vis-à-vis literary politics, of gender inequities of marginalization and sub-humanization of women, of their social and artistic exclusion and of the dominant need for inclusion and democratization, all contribute towards the

distinctive character of this poetry. For the first time, mapping out new terrains the poetry of such Indian women poets bring forth the suppressed desires, lust, sexuality and gestational experiences. This new poetry is new forms of new thematic concerns of contemporary issues have changed the course of human civilization as the country entered the new millennium.

Feminist scholarship originates and participates in the larger efforts of feminism to liberate women from the structures that have marginalized women. Major portion of literature has been written from the male point of view either by ignoring or suppressing woman's point of view or else by subverting it intentionally. Feminists examine experiences of the women from all races, classes and cultures. The traditional images of women as an evil force, a temptress, an inferior being, and as an impediment in man's spiritual path have been totally discarded in favour of a more human, egalitarian image mainly due to the efforts of the feminists and the male humanists. Kamala Das is one of the most popular poets of India who have gained space even in the West. As a feminist, she attacks the convention-ridden society. Her attacks on senseless restrictions and conventions plead for the liberation of her sisterhood. In the touching poem "My Grandmother's House" she exclaims:

I who have lost

My way and beg now at stranger's doors to

Receive love, at least in small exchange?

She is a serious woman writer who has deep concerns in the description of Indian women in literature. Her poetry is strong reactions to patriarchal value-system and justifications for the needs of women to be living beings. She reveals rebellious dimensions in her poetry. In other words, her poems are ponderings upon the unfortunate state of women in a male dominated society. This bespoke not just Das's own need, but it is also a representation of the desires of those voiceless, restricted women, who are taken for granted, both in household and outside.

In the 1960s, women were not allowed to think about their own needs, be that financial, social or physical needs. Women were not supposed to have any desires. Any woman who defied the social codes was looked down upon. It was in such a society that Kamala decided to initiate her writings. Being afraid of criticism, she wrote under the nom de plume of 'Madhavikutty'. 'Madhava' being her husband's name and 'kutty' means a child in Malayalam.

The beauty of Kamala Das's poems is that they speak of man's domination over woman, her emotional bondage and the subsequent betrayal, all simultaneously. Her poems are very precise, short and like a story have a beginning, middle and an end. There are no jerky pauses — neither in the writing nor in the thought process. The flow typified Kamala Das' own self — a seeker of truth and love, who in spite of many betrayals always looked at the brighter side of life. Her poems are honest portrayals of her life, of every woman's life. At the age of forty-two, Kamala Das came out with her autobiography in Malayalam *Ente Katha*, translated into English as *My Story*. The book invited a lot of controversies,

Many not of any literary value. But, in South Asian Fiction Studies, The book became a medium to explore the intensely personal experiences of a woman, including her growth into womanhood, her unsuccessful quest for love in and outside marriage and her "afterlife". It was a paradigm for the way repressive societies fear women's speaking, writing and other self-defining forms of personal expression from the clutches of conventional roles set by the sex obsessed world of domineering male.

In Kamala Das' vision womanhood involves certain collective experiences. She creates a 'female space' and attempts to "bring into being the symbolic weight of female consciousness, to make the invisible visible, to make the silent speak" (Showalter 324) The poetical works of Kamala Das have engaged considerable critical attention and sustained rigorous explication. The subject of Kamala Das' work comprises of "woman" and the revelation of female experiences, be it the trauma of an unhappy marriage or the humiliation of a 'desireless' surrender in sex or the disgust at the male domination. Quest for love is certainly the perennial theme of Kamala's poetry. Love, for a woman is much more than what it is for a man. The difference in experience of love for the two is well put by Kamala Das in "An Introduction":

In him . . . the hungry haste
Of rivers, in me
. . . the oceans' tireless
Waiting.

Kamala Das champions the cause of womanhood entangled simply in the marital cobwebs. She writes about love from a woman's perspective. To her, the centre of love is not the blind adoration and worship of husbands but the communication of love. Many poems of Kamala Das and reflect the seamy side of domestic life and the miserable state of women in contemporary society. A woman's humiliation begins in her childhood, moves to a peak in her youth, and ends only in death.

The roles Indian women play and the images they create are drawn from myths and legends rather than from social situations and personal experiences. In poem after poem Das ridicules the male ego which enslaves woman and keeps her in nets of domesticity. The poem "The Stone Age," for example, presents the indifference of man to woman's miseries,

You turn me into a bird of stone,
a granite dove,
You build round me a shabby drawing room and stroke my
face absentmindedly while you read.

The speaker addresses her man who builds around her a stony wall of comfort and turns her into an inanimate object. The man creates a domestic stone age and the mystique of femininity that goes with it.

In "The Sunshine Cat", Kamala Das describes a specific case of the abuse of a woman. The title suggests a yellow cat. It is not really a cat that has given her company when she was imprisoned but a mere streak of sunshine which spilled into the room when her husband kept her confined in a room. He could confine only her physical body:

...Her husband shut her

In, every morning; locked her in a room of books with
streak of sunshine lying near the door, like A yellow cat.

The woman in the poem seeks a fulfilling experience in the company of her man who has constantly disappointed her by his insincerity, infidelity, and inconstancy. To her he is an oppressor and opportunist. The poem is a silent registration of the helpless indignation at the humiliation of woman in a male-dominated world where no one cares for her individuality, aspiration and the need for emotional fulfillment. To the world outside, she is a sunshine cat appearing always happy with all physical comforts. In reality she is a yellow cat, a deceased cat. The denial of freedom and fulfillment has taken away all her charm, youth and beauty.

As an honest poet of love she is frank and naive without the "intellectual pride". She writes of her longings against a conservative and tabooed society and brings out the pathos of women emerging from passive role to the point of discovering and arresting her individual liberty and identity. In "Summer in Calcutta: she says,
of late I have begun to feel hunger
To take in with greed,
like a forest-fire that Consumes, and, with each killing gains
a wilder Brighter charm all that comes my way.

It will suffice to say that her poetry is based largely on the physical aspects of a female. Whereas feminine sensibility, in the real terms, implies stress on emotional bond yet it can be said that her verses depicting physical love are not devoid of emotions. Underneath the bold words, lie soft feminine feelings. Coupled with her exploration of women's needs she also exhibits the pining to lose one's self in passionate love, as discussed in "The Looking Glass" from The Descendants. She, her females urges give their man "what makes you woman". The things which society suggests are dirty or taboo, are the very things which the women are supposed to give to their beloveds, the

. . . musk of sweat between breasts

The warm shock of menstrual blood,
Should not be hidden from one's beloved. For the poet, love should be defined with unconditional honesty. A woman should "Stand nude before the glass with him," and allow her lover to see her exactly as she is. Likewise, the woman should appreciate even the "fond details" of her lover.

In history, feminine sensibility in literature begins with women writers writing about their own stories by adopting the tradition of men authors but confining their stories to the world of women—the world of domestic life as mothers, wives, sisters, beloveds and widows. However, the concepts of feminine sensibility has expanded into other areas such as exposing the woes and worries of women in the confinement of domestic life, the anxieties and depression they undergo, the suppression, exploitation, discrimination and marginalization they meet in the structural manipulation of colonial repressive apparatuses of patriarchy.

Kamala Das' protest against the prevalent systems of the society turned her into a 'rebel'. Her offended feminine self went on emotional wanderings attempting to explore an identity and freedom. Nevertheless, her traditional make-up of a conventional woman was a factor which persistently forbade her from breaking away completely from the role of a traditional wife.



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A conflict naturally arose between the passivity and rebellion against the male oriented universe. and the conflict persisted all through her life. Her poetry was concerned mostly with herself as a fiction of circumstances and sexual humiliations. Her voice was distinctly feminine intoning the organic mission of her female self's longing for love. Though some might label Das as "a feminist" for her candour in dealing with women's needs and desires, Das, according to many others has never tried to identify herself with any particular version of feminist activism. It is not the attitude to look for love outside marriage but it is a plain woman's longing for love from a man.

In her poetry Kamala Das challenged the phallogocentric idea of society. At a deeper level her poetry seeks to declare through her writings that for a woman writing what she had written was not something totally unexpected. Her writing necessitates a feminist reading. Her ability to depict, not as a male but as a female, the situations, characters and dilemmas straight out of every day dogmatic life, particularly her own - needs to be recognized

Kamala Das gives expression to the smouldering pain of the muted which she has experienced in her life. As a woman who confronts reality in a male-dominated society she is acutely conscious of her femininity with all the contradictory demands made on it by the family and the established society with its apparently irrevocable norms. In spite of her Indian background with its age-old traditions and practices, Das has manifested a genius well known for its candid and outspoken nature. She is basically a romantic at heart and the quest for love and the development of feminine sensibility in her are intertwined. It is from women's lived experience based on inter-personal relationships that feminist epistemology is derived. It is even possible to define feminism in terms of women's experience. Kamala Das very early in life realized how cruel and harsh man could be in his treatment of woman. She wanted to sensitize women of her generation to the fact that if men were not bound by any restricting factors, there was no need for women to feel that they were obliged to obey any restriction. She knew that such an awareness would place women on an equal footing with men. She felt that a radical change was imperative in the society which had such strong inhibitions and which validated lies in public ("I Needed"). In a recent interview the poet has expressed her gratification in alleviating the mental and physical sufferings of women in Kerala in their everyday life she, too, has played her part by her writings and speeches. ("I Needed").

It is Kamala Das' self-appointed task as a social critic and reformer which made her raise her voice against hypocrisy and affectation. In her poem titled "Honour," for example, she says that honour is the dearest word of all in the Nair dictionary. She elaborates it in the following lines:

. . . Honour was a plant my ancestors watered
In the day, a palm to mark their future pyres.
At night their serfs
Let them take to bed their little nieces. . .

She goes on to relate how the unfortunate peasant girls were later thrown into wells and ponds from which they rose "like lotuses and water lilies, each with A bruise on her throat and a soft bulge below her navel". Kamala Das who exposes the hollowness of the "honour" of her ancestors, and through

that the dubious nature of the honour of the men folk in general in established society in this stark manner can speak with equal ease about an illicit affair which she calls her own:

Yet I never can forget
The only man who hurts,
The only one who seems to know
The only way to hurt. ("The Suicide")

Kamala Das considers it inevitable to identify herself with her fellow-beings and write poetry from their perspective. Referring to what is real in My Story she has stated:

Whether something happened to me or to another woman is immaterial. What really matters is the experience, the incident. It may have happened to another woman who is probably too timid to write about it. I wanted to chronicle the times we lived in and I had to write about the experience. (My Story, p. 87)

In the light of feminist critical theory it can be argued that Kamala Das has provided Indian English poetry, a new discourse, the discourse of woman's body language from the point of view of woman. The poet has rummaged through her body to flush out startling images and metaphors in order to body forth her quest for truth, the Revelation and the Apocalypse. (Dodiya, Pp.147-148).

Many poems of Kamala Das reflect the seamy side of the domestic life and the miserable state of women in the contemporary society. A woman's humiliation begins in her childhood, moves to a peak in her youth, and ends only in death. The patriarchal society ignores a woman's aspirations and discourages her in her efforts to advance herself in society. The roles Indian women play and the images they create are drawn from myths and legends rather than from social situations and personal experiences. A woman's struggle with marriage revolves round the fantasy of becoming a partner in life's struggles. Trouble crops up when woman attempts to translate this romance and fantasy into living reality. Das always describes domestic routine with a tinge of irony or in plain understatement. The poem "Gino" expresses the housewife's feeling of shame:

I shall be the fat-kneed hag in the long bus queue
the one from whose shopping-bag the mean potato must
roll across the street.

The cumulative burden of domesticity and routine are expressed in the lines. The monotonous and demanding routine deprives woman of any self-worth. Robbed of dignity and individuality woman sees her person as a slave doomed to obedience and conformity. In the poem "of Calcutta," Kamala Das describes the predicament of the speaker— the housewife,

Yet another nodding
Doll for his parlour,
a walkie talkie one to
Warm his bed at night.

Kamala Das's growth from girlhood to adulthood seems to be most painful experience of life. She was married when she was still a girl to a person whose sexual behaviours produced inerasable scars on her psyche.

She became a premature wife whose pathos of bitter experiences has been expressed in her work. The poem describes the speaker's transformation from a girl to frustrated housewife I. She graces the man's drawing--room as a doll and imparts a womanly voice and warmth to his bed. 'The loss of the soul due to the stifling domestic routine is a matter of great concern for the poet. In poem after poem Das ridicules the male ego which enslaves woman and keeps her in nets of domesticity. Patriarchal customs and conventions bury a housewife in domestic drudge the frustration and discontent of a woman in a patriarchal family is portrayed in Kamala Das' poem "The Old Playhouse":

You called me wife,

I was taught to break saccharine into your tea and to offer at the right moment the vitamins.

Cowering beneath your monstrous ego I ate the magic Loaf and became a dwarf.

The protest poem addressed presumably to her husband enumerates the constraints of married life which Das finds abominable. The poem, according to Devindra Kohli, describes "the fever of domesticity, the routine of lust, artificial comfort and male Domination" (Kohli, p. 117). The narrator protests against the aberrations of married life as well as the casual display of male ego with all its horrid manifestations. Man's indifference reduces woman to dwarf and the family to a little room. The male ego transforms the woman into a grotesque creature with diminished personality. The beginning of the same poem is a thesis in the domestication of woman.

You planned to tame a swallow, to hold her in the long summer of your love so that she would forget not the raw seasons alone and the homes left behind, but also her nature, the urge to fly, and the endless pathways of the sky.

The man wants to tame the woman metaphorically presented as a swallow. In the long process of domestication, she is deprived of her urge to fly. Kamala Das is also conscious of the bane of the creatively inclined woman whose search for equality always ends in frustration. Women with creative potential are compelled to lead an isolated and lonely existence. Even when married, talented women are alienated. The narrator complains in My Story : "My mother-in-law sulked, for she felt that I was spending too much time away from my child and domestic responsibilities. Whenever she said disgruntled things my husband grew angry, and his anger was directed against me and the baby" (My Story, Pp. 97-98).

Kamala Das vehemently protests against the odd and senseless restrictions which force a sensitive and intelligent woman to lead a vapid kind of existence bereft of joys. A woman's future moment of fruitfulness is her waiting for the fulfillment of childbirth. The experience of motherhood is a uniquely female experience. Kamala Das' poem called "Jaisurya" portrays the feelings of a woman associated with the birth of a son. This poem glorifies childbirth as fulfillment of womanhood. Kamala Das weaves into her experience the universal feminine hunger for a child . For generations the women consider motherhood the be-all and end-all of womanhood. Woman looks upon the birth of a child as a necessary fulfillment which earns her recognition in society. Kamala Das celebrates the birth of a son as an

event of redemption in woman's life. A son, for her, is a deliverer who makes a woman's life meaningful.

A woman's life is a dehumanising and humiliating experience in a patriarchal society. The struggle to become a human being is the necessary fate that awaits a woman. This struggle is manifested in women's literature in manifold forms. In women's poetry the persona assumes different forms corresponding to the various roles a woman is forced to assume. The different guises the persona assumes lead to multiple voices. Besides the multiple roles of daughter, wife and mother, a woman poet plays out the roles of unhappy woman, unsated mistress, selfless lover, reluctant nymphomaniac, innocuous doll, vicious seductress and ferocious witch.

Kamala Das emphasizes the point that there is nothing which can be called isolated individual experience. Her insights into woman's sexuality enable her to sympathetically portray the sufferings and actions of all kinds of women in her poetry. Her experiences incorporate personal as well as mythical memories. The adventures of her personae constitute a commentary on the woman's plight the world over. The poems of Das repeatedly emphasize the futility of investment in personal relationships, the growing attention to inner self, the women's potential for self-awareness and their alienation from society. Devindra Kohli observes that "Kamala Das has more to say about the pathos of a woman emerging from a passive role to the point of discovering and asserting her individual freedom and identity" (Kohli, p. 29). K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar also expresses the same idea in these words: "Kamala Das' is a fiercely feminine sensibility that dares without inhibitions to articulate the hurts it has received in largely insensitive man-made world". (p. 680). The central burden of her poetry springs from the conflict between a woman's loss of freedom and identity in a patriarchal society and her ruthless fight to attain the same values. Kamala Das' vision, as Suresh Kohli points out, is "vitaly particularized by woman's point of view." (p. 17). She startles the conformist society by her attempts to redefine herself in personal relationships even by breaking the traditional concept of womanhood. A woman evokes respect as a mother which she fails to evoke as a wife. The self-worth and self-respect of a woman are protected through her son. Motherhood is a compensatory mechanism. Society can control and manipulate a woman by forcing her to take the motherly identity. Patriarchy exploits the symbolic paradigm of motherhood. Indian society inculcates in man an ambivalent attitude toward woman.

Her poems are simply the image cut out of her life. She is a serious woman writer who has deep concerns in the description of Indian women in literature. Her poetry is strong reactions to patriarchal value-system and justifications for the needs of women to be living beings. She reveals rebellious dimensions in her poetry. In other words, her poems are ponderings upon the unfortunate state of women in a male dominated society.

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One area of experiences that is often common is the widening new awareness and awakening amongst the women; the awareness that was not there say, a century ago or so.. It has been portrayed very effectively through the female protagonists in the fictional world of the female writers. The emerging new woman becomes restless as she wants to acquire and establish a distinct identity in the traditionally male-dominated society. Moreover, the poetry written by women authors in commonwealth literature also has the same feature.

As a poet of feminine sensibility, Kamala Das provides vent to the hopes, fears and desire of womankind. She has been the champion of woman's cause in all her writings. Her poems like, "An Introduction", "A Relationship", "Summer in Calcutta", "The Freaks", "The Old Playhouse", "The Dance of Eunuchs" and several others poems have indicated her boldness and freedom in speaking aloud the secret longings and aspirations of womankind. In her poem, "Summer in Calcutta", she portrays a woman's hectic search for the desire of true love under the scorching sun. She says: My worries

Doze, Wee bubbles ring
My glass, like a bride's
Nervous smile, and meet
My lips. Dear, forgive
This moment's lull in
Wanting you, the blur
In memory.

Not only in her poetry but also in her essays, she comes out as an unofficial spokesman of the Indian counterpart of the women's liberation movement in the West and her essays like "Why Not More Than One Husband?", "Why Women Expect out Of Marriage and What they Get" and "The She-Mouse Returns Home" are testimony to this. In Kamala Das, we find much that is conventional and feminine and she speaks aloud of the needs and fears of a common woman and pleads for authentic love and sense of security of her out of her own knowledge.

In reality, Kamala is more aware of the pathos in the life of a common woman playing a very passive role in the tradition-bound society than some of these women poets are highlighting a different cultural and moral ethos.

Despite some very keen remarks made by her poetic personae and characters, the overall stance of Kamala Das is in no way anti-male. She says her sense of feminism within herself is different from the feminism in the West. Western feminism is an anti-male stance. She never hates the male because she loves her husband and she still loves her children. She can derive a lot of happiness from masculine company. So, she is never able to hate them. It indicates that Mrs. Das is equating Western feminism with radical feminism. By refusing the male-female divide, she gives a more certain implication to feminism which emerges to be essentially of a humanistic kind.

She is a female writer who has shown earnest concern for the description of women in literature. Her poetry is the strong revulsion and justification for the needs of women as a living being. She has shown rebellious areas in her poetry. Her poems are pondering upon the unfortunate state of woman in male-dominated society. Feminism aspires to fulfill greater freedom for women politically, socially,

economically and psychologically independent of men. Feminists critically look at the society's general emphasis on women as objects of sexual desire and endeavour to widen women's self-awareness and to attain equality of women with men.

In its broad meaning 'Feminism' means advocacy of the rights of woman. Having no single accepted definition, it encompasses agitation for political and legal rights, equal opportunities, sexual autonomy and rights of self-determination. To be very brief, the feminist movement originated from the recognition of subordination of woman, from the existence of discrimination and inequality based on sex. Feminism is the set of ideas link to a social movement for change. The relationship between the ideas and movement is shifting. It has never been a single unified movement, but it has been made up of different elements .Different phases of feminist movements have gone under different levels such as suffragette, women's emancipation, women's liberation, women's movement, feminism, social feminism, and radical feminism. The common agenda of these various phases is that women are human beings like men and therefore ought to be granted equal rights and women are different from men and therefore ought to be granted the right to represent themselves.

Kamala Das has projected a new device to liberate the women from the bondage of slavery in male-dominated society. As a woman writer, she articulates the hopes and expectations, the concerns and tensions of womankind in the patriarchal society. Indian women raise their voice against the established order and try to affirm their distinct identity breaking the traditional taboos of love and sex which is the outcome of male-dominated society. Kamala Das' poetry exposes the subjugation of women by the male hegemony of Indian society. She discovers the male hegemony from the inner core of her feminine consciousness. Mrs. Das searches the reality through life, nature and herself.

She becomes the mouthpiece of all women hegemonic society. In her poems, she protests against the roles of a wife, mother and daughter in a patriarchal society. She expresses:

I want 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 the gender difference. (My Story, P. 166)

Kamala Das desires to keep women's own way beyond the theories, ideologies and social practices based on the ideals of the humanitarian values. Human psyche is a complex entity and its complete evaluation is possible only through the practical experience that varies according to the climate of the social order and individual commitment to it. She said that a woman should get a distinction of personality. She longs for equal respect to every living soul, and says that the cultural value cannot be accepted as the ultimate end of human survival and the basis of female suppression.

She seeks a new ground of morality because the seeds of revolt are buried in her own psyche due to the negative attitude of her father towards her mother, the pricking and provocation in her childhood and the final betrayal of her freedom in the form of marriage. The sexual superiority of her husband, his sexual haste that have caused hurt to her self-respect compelled her to give a bold and frank treatment to the sexual harassment done by man to woman.

In her poems, Kamala Das attempts to give a distinctive identity to women. She draws the different roles of a woman who has acquired the mixed role of saint and sinner whereas the man remains aloof in his extremely secure world. Apart from that, Kamala Das is also labeled as a feminist because of her dealing with women's need and desire in her works. She is a poet who is noted for her honesty and intense personal experiences including her growth into womanhood and her unsuccessful quest for love in a traditional society. Her poems are mostly concerned with her marriages, love life, desire for intimacy and various relationships. She expresses the warmth of her childhood and the family home in Kerala in her works. She is the personification of the most significant stage of the development of Indian feminine poetic sensibility which has not yet achieved by her younger contemporaries. Her poetic world is exclusively her own exploration of her personal anguish, pain, expectations of love, care, protection and inhibitions. She attempts to highlight the private world of feminine consciousness exhibiting the burden of social convention and the construction of the sexual binary that never permit a woman to seek an identity either in personal or professional life.

In Kamala Das' poetry, feelings of misery, pain, frustration, loneliness and helplessness of women have been explored clearly. She has shown women's psychic experience in an androcentric society. Love, sex, marriage and companionship are the important subjects in Kamala Das' poems and search for love is the principal provocation of her poetry. She expresses her strong reaction and justification as a woman. She reveals a complete rebellious dimension in her poetry. In the opinion of Sharad Rajimwale, Kamala Das' poetry embodies the agonies of women emerging from the state of subordination and bondage inflicted upon them by patriarchal system. He also says that their agonies serve to establish their identity and the self. He does not agree with the 'critical outlook' which looks at her poems 'as the expression of the pitiable plight of a defenseless woman who needs love, consideration and sympathy and desires a loving husband, warmth and home' (Rajinwade, Pp. 76-78). Indeed, Kamala Das with the consciousness of being a woman asserts her identity. Her feminist consciousness is that of the third stage that is, the female stage in which a woman becomes conscious of her own identity and asserts for it.

As a staunch feminist precursor, her works testify to the bitter resentment felt by women who are unable to free themselves from oppressive and depressing roles. She tries to express her womanhood and her life-experiences as a woman. Kamala Das obviously reveals the instinctive demands of a woman in growth. She uses phrases and words in the poem to show a grown-up woman's instinctive desires. She reveals the force of creative demand in growth and development. She says that the root cause of her worry

is her growing up to adolescence and to womanhood. She says that the tragedy of life is growth not dead in the patriarchal society:

The tragedy of life is not death but growth, the child growing into an adult and growing out needs discovering that the old house black-rimmed nails and scalps that emanate a sweet, mouldy smell.

A women's struggle begins in her girlhood and is confounded by her marriage. Growing up is a painful experience for woman. The speaker experiences the pleasures and pains associated with each phase of her life.

Kamala Das consoles herself in recollecting the seascape which was seen in her childhood. She portrays the experiences of different stages of life as a woman in the traditional society. She faces many problems in the journey of her life. But she lives with all contingent regrets and distinct agonies from time to time.

Kamala Das has expressed her hopes, fears and desires of womankind in her search for her own feminist identity, her experience of childbirth, her shattered married life, her mental illness, her attempt to suicide, intense images of physical torture inflicted upon her by her husband, her attack on marriage and domesticity, her loss of true-love, her responsibility as woman, wife and mother in the male-centered society in her poems

A woman writes consciously out of her gender as a representative of the internally colonized and marginalized half of the human race. second .Kamala Das shares the collective experiences and collective oppression of women which she represent uniquely in their poetry. An unconscious feminist ideology remains latent in her poetry which portrays women's untiring battle against the forces of male domination and tyranny.

III. CONCLUSION

Torn between domestic duties and artistic aspirations, Kamala Das emerges successfully from the confusion and contradiction that confront a woman's life. It is natural for women writers to expose themselves consciously to their female-predecessors in their anxiety of poetic influence. But Kamala Das appears not to be influenced by any female poet in their repudiation of the mystique of feminine fulfillment. The drive for self-knowledge which their speakers express is a search for identity. She highlights the miserable predicament of woman who struggles to reconcile herself between the society's expectations of womanhood and her own expectation of feminine fulfillment.

Life to Kamala Das means life as a woman. She writes consciously as a woman, as a housewife and a mother. She defines herself in terms of her relationships with others - as daughter, wife, mother or lover. Her poetry is celebration of womanhood. The destiny of a woman is to play simultaneously several roles. Each role contributes to the overall experience of woman in a patriarchy. Kamala Das indicate that a woman's identity is centered round herself which is ignored by the lopsided tradition of patriarchy. As a women poet,

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Kamala Das their experiences through others, who are related to them in her primary role as woman. Despite some very keen remarks made by her poetic personae and characters, the overall stance of Mrs. Das is in no way anti-male. She says her sense of feminism within herself is different from the feminism in the West. Western feminism is an anti-male stance. She never hates the male because she loves her husband and she still loves her children. She can derive a lot of happiness from masculine company. So, she is never able to hate them.

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