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## KAMALA DAS: THE IMAGE OF FEMININE SENSIBILITY IN INDIAN ENGLISH POETRY

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### KEYWORDS

Feminist, Disposition,  
Infuriated, Sensibilities, Protest,  
Endearing.

### ABSTRACT

One of the most well-known feminists of the postcolonial era was Kamala Das. The poetry of Kamala Das is essentially feminist poetry. The focus of this poem is Kamala Das as a woman—as a wife, a mother, and a sexual companion for many men besides her husband. The poems in which Kamala Das describes the personality and disposition of her husband are those in which her feminine sensibility comes through most strongly and eloquently. One of her poems, *The Old Playhouse*, is infused with a feminine sensibility. Her husband's approach to making love to her infuriated her feminine sensibilities. Thus, only a strong woman would express her disgust at a husband who only wants to satisfy his lust. The feminine sensibility of Kamala Das forces her to characterize her husband in *The Sunshine Cat* as a self-centered, cowardly man who did not love her adequately. She claims that her husband had been treating her like a prisoner who had nothing except a yellow cat (or a ray of sunshine) for companionship. Her poems are distinctly feminine due to the common female themes and even the images and symbols she uses. Both the subject matter and the tone of her poetry are feminine. Indeed, in her poetry, she skilfully combines feisty female protest with endearing feminine feelings.

### Introduction

The poet Kamala Das is inextricably linked to Indian feminism's past; in fact, hers is the country's first and most significant feminist movement. We discovered that she made the most of her works to eloquently capture the pleasures and sufferings of women folk. No matter what she wrote, Pan always aimed to depict some of the most contentious aspects of Indian culture, especially the pressing challenges facing women. Understanding Kamala Das's works require understanding her personal life narrative, which is so intricately entwined with her work that one cannot be tackled without the assistance of the other. Kamala Das experienced the tremendous tragedies of family life firsthand. Her marriage had been a complex disaster. Throughout her life, she saw partnerships fall apart. Kamala Das was forced to deal with the upheaval of a disintegrating marriage. She observed and experienced the blind patriarchy's power over her, which crushed all of her goals, aspirations, and concerns for her health. With her immense energy, she managed to extract some of the most contentious works of Indian English writing from the turmoil. The poetess fiercely objects to men's dominance and the subsequent diminution of women. Nobody looks out for the woman's goals and aspirations since she is expected to follow specific traditional duties. Conversational cadence and language convey the level of dissent. It represents the entire womanhood's fight against the male ego. The poetry of Kamala Das is an honest and direct representation of feminine sensibility. She defied established, methodical, and customary standards and ideals and upholds a way of living that is distinguished by an unusual and radically contemporary viewpoint.

The two poems Kamala Das wrote about the birth of her son also display her feminine sensibilities. The most valuable emotions that a mother experiences before giving birth to a kid and then after giving birth to the anticipated child are expressed in the poem *Jaisurya*. *The White Flowers* is the title of the second poem. Her poetry is unmistakably feminine due to the common female topics and even the pictures and symbols she uses. She values the male and female human bodies as precious possessions and divine gifts. Both the subject matter and the tone of her

poetry are feminine. She is emotional, sensual, and sensitive. She has a strong emotional personality and occasionally loses control of it. For illustration, her attitude toward forgiveness in her poem *Composition* typifies the feminine sensibility of India. She claims in the poem to have attained the age of universal forgiveness and that she is prepared to forgive both friends and those who have damaged friendships. Indeed, in her poetry, she skillfully combines feisty female protest with endearing feminine feelings.

Her writings may be categorized as protest poetry. Her protest is aimed at the injustices and oppression that women have historically experienced in India. She criticizes the Indian women for believing that their sole purpose is to lie under a guy in order to state his passion in a poem titled *The Conflagration*. She is telling the women that the world is far bigger than their six-foot-tall husbands. Her poetry, therefore, has both a social and reformatory goal. In contrast to the poetry of the majority of other English-language female poets, her poetry is respected.

### Her Poetry Reflects The Power Of Governance And Her Feminine Sensibility

Kamala Das is recognized as a vocalist with a feminine sensibility who rejects traditional social norms and customs. These customs do not benefit women in any way; instead, they severely undervalue females in this society that is predominately male. Under a man's authority, a woman's sensitive sentiments and emotions are completely repressed. K.R.S. Iyengar writes: "Kamala Das is a fiercely feminine sensibility that dares without inhibitions to articulate the hurts it has received in an insensitive largely man-made world." She says:

"A man to love is easy but living

Without him afterward may have to be faced." (*The Looking Glass*)

Her poetry is driven and governed by her feminine sensibility, and it is this sensitivity that has given her poetry a unique style. The feminine sensibility of Kamala Das is ravenous for a real lover or a love of emotions, but it is unable to find its hues. She always yearns for love to satisfy her. When she is rejected by real love, it sickens her severely:

"Who can

Help us who have lived so long

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And have failed in love?" (The Freaks)

The poems in which Kamala Das describes how her husband is treated and behaves are the ones in which her feminine sensitivity is most strongly and vehemently expressed. One of her poems, *The Old Playhouse*, is infused with a feminine sensibility. Her husband's approach to making love to her infuriated her feminine sensibilities. He made love out of pure desire, not out of any love at all. Simply a brave woman would voice her anger at a spouse who only wants to satisfy his need and who neither shows her affection nor expects it from her. The man who allowed his saliva to enter her lips and who had already gotten into every crevice of her body did not harbor the slightest feelings of love or affection for her.

The most valuable emotions that a mother experiences before giving birth to a kid and then after giving birth to the anticipated child are expressed in the poem *Jaisurya*. Only a feminine sensibility could have done justice to the poem's concept of pregnancy or motherhood. How ecstatic the poetess was to have her son! What a lovely illustration of female sensibility.

"And then wailing into light

He came, so fair, a streak of light trust

Into the fading light." (*Jaisurya* poem)

Kamala Das's feminine intuition has profoundly suffered in the absence of love, as can be observed in her love poetry. Much of Kamala Das' poetry exemplifies her feminine sensibility, especially those in which she dresses as Radha and waits for Krishna to end her suffering love.

As a pioneering author, Kamala Das has distinguished herself and constantly stands out. The Indian first observed in her words the yearning, the sexuality, and how audaciously she declared it as a woman. Her poetry is the authentic expression of her jerky power. Being a woman, she writes openly about her body, her instincts, her belongings, and the lust she feels for her men in this completely unique field of writing. Male callousness, heartlessness, and sexuality severely wound and torment feminine sensibility:

"How can my love hold him when

The other

Flaunts a gaudy lust and is

Lioness

To his beast?" (*A Losing Battle*)

### **Kamala Das's Advocacy Of The Right Of Women To Independence**

One of the most prominent poets of modern Indian English literature, Kamala Das is renowned for using a fiery voice in her poetry. The poetry in *The Voice of a Rebel Woman Against Patriarchy: A Study of Kamala Das* finest capture her feminine sensibility. Despite the fact that her writing is typically categorized as personal and introspective, she is a rebellious figure among Indian poets thanks to her honest handling of female sexuality and unabashed innocence. His poetry is devoid of "the novel of the 19th century, feeling, and romantic love," in contrast to other writers. As she candidly discusses her position in a male-dominated culture and its prevalent traditional patriarchal conventions, where "a woman is not born, Rather, she becomes a woman," her poetry is infused with the note and tone of a rebellious woman. She has moved beyond the position of a poet, and her poetry collections have taken on a life of their own. Through her direct and frank language, she explores the silence of Indian women and critiques patriarchal rule. Where sex or desire is discussed in Indian society. Since these are the things, women must offer unconditionally yet are still viewed as filthy or forbidden, Kamala Das utilizes them as a means of resistance in her poetry.

"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 Old Playhouse*)

In addition to pursuing and achieving her goal of having the freedom to

do as she pleases, Kamala Das's poems of protest against social norms and against the limitations and restrictions that husbands or society at the large place on women imply her support for all women's rights to an equal experience with such freedom. It also emphasizes how important it is to acknowledge the needs and rights of Indian women generally. Unquestionably, her tone of resentment and fury in these poems conveys her sense of unfairness toward the societal structure. Kamala Das might therefore be described as a passionate and ardent feminist. She may be viewed as a powerful advocate for women's rights and a champion of the cause to free women from the bonds of domestic servitude to males. The fight for women's emancipation from male dominance was in its early and middle phases when Kamala Das penned these poems (in the 1960s and 1970s of the 20th century), but now its success has beyond even the most optimistic predictions of the women who led the movement. However, during the time Kamala Das composed her poems, Indian women were obedient to their parents or their husbands, and the issue of having extramarital affairs did not even come up. Today, Indian women are as emancipated as their counterparts in Britain and the United States. Among the first women to assert this independence, Kamala Das was one of the select few to do so and to use it to the utmost degree feasible.

### **Fierce Female Protest And Charming Feminine Sentiments In Her Poetry**

*My Story* is a confessional work by a confessional poetess that outlines the social and emotional aspects of women's jail. The main premise of *My Story* is how difficult it is for women to find love in the so-called "system of arranged marriage" in India. Her poetry also examines the dynamics between men and women and how a guy uses a woman's body for his own purposes. As Sunita B. Nimavat puts it, "as the first bold voice of feminine sensibilities, she was a rebellious spirit with profundity and deep concern for the deprived, the poor, and the exploited". Kamala Das writes:

"Poets cannot close their shops like shop men  
and return home. Their shop is their mind  
and as long as they carry it with them, they  
feel the pressures and the torments. A poet's  
raw material is not stone or clay, it is his/  
her personality." (*My Story*)

The feminine sex has benefited from Kamala Das's work as a confessional poet by being more aware of their repressed sexual impulses and unhappiness with their spouses in that regard. She has therefore provided a brief incentive for women to speak up or at the very least not be suppressed. In these introspective poems, Kamala Das assumes the role of a feminist, subtly calling for the freedom of women from societal norms and taboos.

### **The Revolt Of Her Feminine Sensibility**

The poems in which Kamala Das recounts her husband's treatment and temperament are those in which her feminine sense comes through most strongly and clearly. One of her poems, *The Old Playhouse*, is infused with a feminine sensibility. Her husband's approach to making love to her infuriated her feminine sensibilities. He made love out of pure desire, not out of any love at all. Simply a brave woman would voice her anger at a spouse who only wants to satisfy his need and who neither shows her affection nor expects it from her. The man who had consented to use her body had no romantic or affectionate feelings for her. This is female sensibility protesting against a man who engages in sexual activity in a robotic and emotionless manner just to gratify his passion. In the poem named *The Freaks*, Kamala Das bemoans the fact that her husband's fingertip can only serve to arouse her skin's languid appetite and that, despite their extended living together, love has eluded them, leaving her heart feeling empty like a cistern. She then refers to herself as a freak and claims that the only reason she occasionally displays a grand, flashy lust is to save her face. Kamala Das' feminine sensibility, which she attributes to *The Sunshine Cat*, drives her to characterize her husband as a self-centered, timid guy who neither loved her nor exploited her appropriately. She says:

“Her husband shut her,

In every morning, locked her in a room of books,

With a streak of sunshine lying near the door like,

A yellow cat to keep her company.” (The Sunshine cat)

Only a yellow cat (or a ray of sunlight) had been keeping her company while she had been treated like a prisoner by her husband. She had become "a frigid and half-dead lady" as a result of his treatment of her, rendering her useless to a guy seeking sex.

In a poem titled *A Losing Battle*, Kamala Das claims that women should use the cheapest bait possible instead of love to lure men into their traps. In a poem titled *The Conflagration*, this begging for women's independence from male dominance is even more forceful and unrestrained. Here, Kamala Das questions whether lying next to a man in bed is truly happy before advising women to establish their individuality in order to live in the world outside of a lover or a husband's six-foot frame. Along with the poems already mentioned, Kamala Das has produced a number of other works that reflect her feminist ideals and attitude of resistance to male control. As was already noted, Kamala Das has an unconventional approach to marriage. She sees marriage as a game being played by an evil spouse. Her female ego emerges when she reluctantly talks about how marriage has robbed her of her freedom. In the poem named *Of Calcutta*, she describes the profound internal suffering brought on by her marriage. In this poem, she alleges that her husband used her as a "walkie-talkie" so that he could keep warm in bed at night. She felt like a trained circus dog that had been treated worse, and she asks:

“Here in my husband's home, I am a trained circus dog

Jumping my routine hoops each day, where is my soul,

My spirit, where the muted tongue of my desire?” (*Of Calcutta Poem*)

Because her spouse merely exploited her for his selfish sexual gratification and showed her no true love or compassion, Kamala Das' marriage ended in divorce. She has described how her husband approaches sexual activity with her in an impersonal and robotic manner, which undoubtedly satisfies her desire but deprives her of the love and affection that every woman expects from her husband and whose absence causes her not only disappointment but also misery and even torture. In addition to expressing Kamala Das's hatred toward her husband, these poems also implicitly express the indignation of other women who are in a similar situation. Poetry of protest, sorrow, contempt, despair, and anger characterizes Kamala Das's work. This critic claims that her poetry expresses the wounds it has endured in an intense, primarily artificial environment without restraint. She may be seen to have announced a new morality in which the traditional values of virginity, submissiveness, and dependency on males have been abandoned. The new Kamala Das-type woman is on a mission to destroy the idea of male dominance and his egotistical superiority over her.

### Conclusion

One of the most well-known contemporary Indian poetesses is Kamala Das. She is also well known for her confessionalism. One of her poetry's strongest subjects is feminism. Every poem addresses feminism in a female-oriented manner. Writing that is feminine differs from writing that is feminist. The writing by women in Indian English literature that

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focuses on women's identities and resistance also fosters a modern consciousness in both men and women. However, feminist writing conveys a general understanding of female dominance. The philosophy underlies its importance rather than the textbook's literary quality. The study of the feminine emerges as a reaction to patriarchy or the prevalent chauvinist ideologies. Kamala Das is a poet who writes in the love and sexual subgenres. It is not necessarily conventional or outdated; it is pertinent to include or make an appearance in the vast majority of her love poetry. In addition, a summary of doubt, love, and gender engage that it is a well-known stance in her poetry as well as comes into view as one of its intervening themes.

As a result, Kamala Das is a modern Indian author who is fully aware of her artistic intent and purpose as well as of her obligation to uphold her vision. Unquestionably, a feminist voice is being heard here as it expresses the aspirations and stifling conditions, worries, and frustrations of women. She expressly writes about love, sex, and marriage—all topics that are familiar to her and fully within her consciousness. Her lyrical voice, which is generally her own and cannot be mistaken for anybody else's, is infused with a feminine cum feminist sensibility. It is important to note that Kamala Das' poetry has themes that center on the history of feminine senses. Writing on the oppressed woman in society is Kamala Das. Her stance against women's exploitation and marginalization, as well as her concern for the social and cultural construction of gender, are virtually always evident in her works. She has shown that women's lives are not fundamentally different from men's lives. Kamala Das is known as a furious feminist poet since almost all of her poems are protest poems that deliver a powerful message of feminism in a personal tone.

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