

EXPLORING FEMALE IDENTITY IN KAMALA DAS'S POEM THE OLD PLAYHOUSE

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Abstract

India has 23 recognized regional languages and 2,000 more native languages, making the English language indivisible from India. It is difficult for a nation like India to have a common tongue, but after plundering India's valuable resources, colonizers gave us a language recognized across the globe called English, through which nations like India attempt to make themselves known to other different parts of the universe. The pioneer of confessional women's writing in India is Kamala Das, a prominent member of English literature. She created a brand-new space where women could freely express their deepest emotions, including their hopes, loves, lusts, pain, and agony. In a manner that is rare in Indian culture, Das communicates her longing for love with brutal honesty and candor. She tends to use writing as therapy. She does a sort of emotional tease in her writings. Das depicts a husband-wife connection in which the husband builds a conceptual model which the wife can accommodate in this poetry. In this poem, the author depicts a lady who is battling for freedom and individuality. The experimentation with affection and the value of the individual in this poetry.

Keywords: Suppression, discrimination, love-longings, Identity

The notion that all people are created equal, irrespective of their gender, is known as feminism. Men and women should be considered equal; hence the feminism movement advocates for gender equity. Das created forcefully and moving female confessional writing, with the investigation of the man-woman connection as a recurring topic. Her poetry gives voice to a new generation of women who are searching for their own identities. She openly rebels over Indian general societal presumptions and injustices about what it means to be a woman, which is so uncomfortably prevalent. Kamala Das' third collection of poetry, *The Old Playhouse, and Other Poems* are titled after this poem (1973). It is directed to 'you,' the spouse, who via his deft manoeuvres sought to restrict her freedom of motion and activity. In the same manner that she dislikes him and his methods, the speaker of the poem is uncomfortable with this. His 'horrific ego' is criticized in this passage since it

completely diminished and lets her down. Her mind is transformed into ‘an old playhouse that has all the colours off’ as a result.

The poet’s fight against male dominance and the resulting dwarfing of women may be seen in the title work. The woman's personal desires and objectives are ignored in favour of the expectation that she performs specific traditional responsibilities. The rebellion of all females against with the male ego is symbolized by the strength of the outcry as expressed in colloquial phrases and rhythm. The speaker uses the term ‘tame’ in the poem as a forceful statement of imprisonment and control to emphasize how the lover is being subjugated while being imprisoned by her ‘nature, the longing to soar, and the unending of the sky.’ The lyrics imply a man's dominance while dismissing a woman's desire to pursue her aspirations.

“The strength and implied melancholy of the final lyric are linked up in the basic premises it offers us,” says Arlene R.K. Zide. Love, she says, is ‘Narcissus by the top of a cliff, tormented its sad face,’ and her studies of love are self-examinations. To understand who she was and to discover her true self, she had turned to him, her husband, but all she had discovered was the powerful man, with his time-honored methods of doling out love in fatal quantities and putting himself up for swallowing whole. In the meantime, the female identity ‘reflectors to splinter,’ must search for liberation to avoid becoming an old playhouse due to those poisonous dosages of masculine ego. By confessing that she arose "to learn/ What I was, and by having to learn, to flourish, but every/ Learning you decided to give was about themselves," the speaker attempts to undermine how men establish femininity. This statement suggests that the narrator came in search of consciousness and personal development, but her husband is supposed to teach her about himself. According to Cixous, men in traditional cultures reaffirm only themselves about ‘that very same personality, identity, self-congratulating behavior’ (pp. 879)

Feminism is commonly mistaken for a ‘sexual revolution’ since it uses the term ‘feminine.’ But we must understand that feminism is not only a movement for women; it is a ‘revolution for all persons’ that cares about the liberation of both men and women. However, we must accept that for a very long time, women have been the main targets of oppression and sexual objectification. The purpose of feminism is to eradicate the ideas of subordination and control and put men and women on equal terms. Kamala Das desires a certain form of sovereignty; liberty that may be viewed as whole or ultimate; liberty with a larger viewpoint. a liberation from patriarchal constraints that enables you to experience love at each of its extremes. However, she recognizes that neither of these things is conceivable in human life. She rejects the ego and assertiveness of men. Although filled

with unhappiness and strife, Kamala Das' depiction of a man and woman's relationship is unique. The reader is tempted to listen in wonder as this marriage arrangement shouts demonstrate a sense.

The poetess desired stability and permanency, as well as love and delicacy, from her muscular spouse, but he was unable to meet her needs in these areas. She is therefore grieving and being damned in his presence. The poem's start emphasizes the man's possessive feeling. To make the poetess remember her pleasant moments, her previous residences, and her innate importance as a woman, the man (or, more accurately, the poetess' husband) sought to control the beautiful bird that she was and tortured her sexually. Her body's reaction and its feeble tremors gratified him. He gave her frantic kisses and overpowered her with his rough touch. She made an effort to modify herself in accordance with his wants, but in the process, she sacrificed her uniqueness and devolved into a simple dwarf beneath his terrible masculine ego.

In her instance, the happy days came to an abrupt end. She started to feel the onset of fall and the oppressive mood created by the burning paper and increasing fumes. She portrays the struggles of a woman who has become disoriented in the turbulent sea of human experience. The personality is refused love and companionship. She is free to follow her husband's moods and circumstances since he is constantly at ease. She uses a typically feminine style to convey the disgust and agony of the lady in her heart in one of her writings, *The Stone Age*. Her general reaction to everything is one of despair and hopelessness, with little prospect of regeneration. Her dancing is abandoned, she stops singing, and her imagination and thoughts become 'an old playhouse with all its lights turned out.' In comparison, the guy takes a strict stance with her and provides his love in lethal dosages, whilst the woman's love is self-obsessed and unpleasant but nevertheless looks for satisfaction in individuality rather than in servitude. For it to flourish, love has to be passionate and honest, not carnal and murky. The lady does not enjoy the idea of a man and woman performing sexual fulfillment, as in the terms 'the water's edge' and 'to wipe the water.'

Kamala Das, therefore, shrank to the size of a dwarf beneath the enormous weight of his gigantic ego and lusty masculinity. All of her expectations were crushed to bits, and her upbeat disposition permanently vanished. She started to have a severe emotional void and found it difficult to enjoy her intercourse with him. She developed aberrant psychology and started knocking on people's doors in search of love. She got resentful of her man's increasingly ardent advances, so she sought revenge on him by the yearning to escape his traps and find safety in other people's embraces. She is very aware of the aggressive sense

of masculinity. Being the powerful guy that he is, he demonstrates his affection to her in too intense ways that may please him but are fatal to her. It is a man's self-centered love that seeks fulfilment only through a woman without anticipating a spouse's mutual physical and emotional reactions. Kamala Das is unkind toward the man. Her perspective has often led women to the disheartening conclusion that males are utterly self-centered in their interactions with her.

In addition, the speaker discusses how women are objectified in a patriarchal system. The speaker depicts the woman as an asset of a man locked in a cage inside his male supremacy space by saying, "Your room is/ Always lit by artificial lights, your windows always/ shut," (*TOPH*) which demonstrates that she is obligated to the four walls of the residence and entirely cut off from interaction with the outside world. According to Beauvoir, the emergence of neo-liberalism and private ownership had caused men to behave women as particles and resource possessions.

The need for imaginative and cognitive freedom in a traditional society is also mentioned by the speaker. When a lady feels deserted at her conjugal home, where "No more singing, no more dancing, my mind is an old/Playhouse with all its lights put out," it is a representation of that unspoken sensation in her inner consciousness. The speaker of the poem also demands living privacy and independence to nurture her creative processes, which is consistent with Virginia Woolf's assertion that a woman deserves a place for her innovation and a room to write. The speaker is trapped and secluded in the poem, and there is no light in her chamber, which suggests a full separation from artistic expression.

Due to her early marriage and masculine dominance in her home, as well as the fact that she was only ready to become a mother after the birth of her third baby, the personalized form lends objectivity to her poetry while simultaneously revealing that they are based on her personal experiences. As a result, literature serves as a catharsis for her suppressed feelings, serving as a collective voice for Indian femininity and vehemently advocating for gender equality as a problem that, tragically, has persisted despite all of our modern-day technical and philosophical accomplishments.

As a feminist, Kamala Das organizes a revolt against a culture rife with conventions that suppresses poems that 'one may feel body and see the raw intellectual essence on the man-woman interaction.' In her poems, Kamala Das captures the agony of women trying to forge their own identities and escape servitude and captivity. She has a lot to say about the sadness of a woman breaking out of a dominating role and coming to terms with her own sense of individuality and independence. The poetess may evoke strong emotions in her audience by bringing her emotions to life in front of them. Although her poetry is a major

divergence from the work of earlier female Indian poets, it yet celebrates the universal experiences of self, absolutely adore, sorrow, disappointment, and dissatisfaction with the customary manner of gender presentation as perceived by a feminine Indian sensibility. The accomplishments and predictable gender expectations of Kamala Das go much further than her poetic words. In spite of class, faith, caste, or location, she serves as the inspiration and compass for the majority of current Indian female poets.

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