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# Golden Research Thoughts

**GRT**

**FEMININE URGES IN POEMS OF KAMALA DAS**



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**S. Y. B. A.**

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## ABSTRACT

*This research article is focus on the poetess Kamala Das' the ideas of feminine urges through her journey of self exploration and self identification. She expresses the bitter experiences of her life as she explains ideas of love, alienation and the discrimination that she faced on a regular basis. She successfully explores various identities as woman and herself. These identities are a result of her quests of the various bitter situations of her life which are demonstrated in her work by miseries, frustrations, loneliness, alienation and despair.*

**KEYWORDS** :feminine, alienation, despair, identity, love.

## INTRODUCTION:

Since ancient to present, women have always been oppressed and suppressed by the mindset of male dominated the society. In the course of the time, various writers who are attempted to reexamine the position of women in the hierarchical mindset. Among these writers was the well known woman writer who direct and indirectly attacked on male chauvinism by the medium of



writing by Kamala Das. It is an important to she had in a time when India had yet not witnessed a woman who was blunt in conveying her thoughts and idea that were not much spoken off in the public places and secondly, the world which had already witnessed the first wave of feminism was now passing through an even stronger Second Wave of Feminism . Kamala Das' work deals the ideas raised on the female sex by constantly targeting the male ego and their constant discrimination towards the fairer sex. To put all of the said statements into perspective, the paper will discuss the writer in detail and establish how she championed the cause of providing a new identity as a feministic point of view.

Sunanda P.Chavan states her charismatic personality through the lines : "Kamala Das embodies

the most significant stage of development of Indian Feminine poetic sensibility not yet reached by her contemporaries." To begin with, her work spans across several volumes of poetry, short stories, autobiography and several columns. She constantly tries to redefine the space of society by questioning the pitiable positions that have been granted to women. She asserts in her poem – "The Introduction"

"Dress in sarees, be girl  
Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,  
Be a quarreler with servants. Fit in. Oh,  
Belong, cried the categorizers"

The poetess explains that the expectation of the society from her as a woman, she must play various roles according to the social norms and conditions, i.e. wife, embroider, cook. The above lines also reflections of women's role to private places. In short, Kamala Das puts forward the idea of how a women's identity is merely established by belonging to certain conventional roles. Consequently, she even becomes gloomy and shattered at various instances in her work. For she declares that "my love is an empty gift, a gilded empty container, good for show, nothing else," "Ah, why does love come to me like pain Again and again and again?" . In the other words, the resonance of theme of love in her poem also demonstrates her exploration of the self as she longs for both carnal and spiritual love. Yet, unable to achieve it she shifts her identities from being an obedient one to the one who is rebellious and is even ready to move into the public arena to fulfill her needs of love.

"you cannot believe, darling,  
Can you, that I lived in such a house and  
Was proud, and loved.... I who have lost  
My way and beg now at strangers' doors to  
Receive love, at least in small change?"

It is examined that the writer is haunted by a sense of loneliness, despair and alienation as she wants to be loved again. It is for this she readily moves into another uncommon domain-the public life where she discusses with other males to receive love. Her calmness to satisfy her needs can be gauged from her mention of the line – 'Receive love, at least in small change.' A critic Devendra Kohli observes: "When Kamala Das speaks of love outside marriage, she is not really propagating adultery and infidelity, but merely, searching for a relationship which gives both love and security."

The self image and identity can be seen echoing throughout her works as various dichotomies come into working-reality and appearance, public and private life, inner and outer self, role as a woman and as a female writer. She states the quest in her autobiography "One's real world is not what is outside him. It is the immeasurable world inside him that is real. Only the one, who has decided to travel inwards, will realize that his route has no end". Through her quest of the real identity as a woman she keenly focus on the study of Krishna-Radha myth at various places. For instance in her poem 'The Maggots' which states:

" At sunset, on the river bank, Krishna Loved her for the last time and left...  
That night in her husband's arms, Radha felt So dead that he asked,  
What is wrong, Do you mind my kisses, love?"

And she said, No, not at all, but thought,  
What is it to the corpse if the maggots nip?"

This poem becomes significant because it makes all that Kamala Das attempts to highlight universal by the mention of Radha-Krishna myth on feministic point of view. So far as, one sees it is not just a normal woman but all entities omnipresent which go through the sufferings, grief and pain . Through her exploration of the idea of identity she declares a sense of chaos that has overcome not just a single individual but also all aspects as a whole. She portrays homogeneity in conveying to the readers the position of all womankind who are all in some way or the other marginalized. In fact ,this marginalization is felt by women both within and without. She even resorts to the surreal -the bhaktism, where through Sarguna aspect she imagines herself to be much like Meera Bai . This idea is clear in the following lines of her poem "A Request"

"O Krishna, I am melting, melting, melting  
Nothing remains but you ..."

In other words, like Mira , she now seeks union with none but the lord Krishna to overcome her agony. She often uses the myth of Krishna to convey her message. K.R. Srinivas Iyenger observes: "Kamala Das is a new phenomenon in Indo- Anglican poetry, a far poetic cry indeed from Toru Dutt or even Sarojini Naidu. Kamala Das` s is fiercely feminine sensibility that dares without inhibitions to articulate the hurts it has received in an insensitive man-made world"

In her works, the moments of her anguish and distress are powerfully demonstrated. In her poem "The Prisoner" this is clearly explains,

"As the prisoner studies  
His prison's geography of your body dear love,  
For I must some day find an escape from its shore."

Thus, as one observes in the lines it appears that the writer is a prisoner who seeks an escape from the prison house as she yearns for love. So , she transgresses through various identities as she tries to bring an end to her misery. She is known as a prisoner, Krishna's lover-Radha and even the bhakti saint Radha. She seems to have no regrets in being open about her affairs with strangers as she tries to fulfill her desires as discussed earlier. There is a sense of self image and her identity as she tries to balance between both conventional woman who plays the role of a wife ready to work as per her husband wishes and a newly emerged Indian woman who revolts for her rights, is vocal about her demands and is aware. A Critic N. Dwivedi makes an important observation on the works of the writer : " It should, however, be remembered that Kamala Das wrote her poetry against a more conservative and tabooed society. ... She has, therefore, more to say about the pathos of a woman emerging from a passive role to the point of discovering and asserting her individual liberty and identity. More often than not she concentrates on sexual love, and her woman-persona rises as though in a mood of revolt". It is also significant that even in her real life Kamala Das blurred the lines of her identity and self image not only on the basis of gender but also religion as she went on to change her religion. Her disillusionment of the ideas of love springs from her own life as visible in her autobiography- 'My Story'.

Thus, she becomes representative of an identity symbolic of womanhood as a whole who face discrimination in the hands of male chauvinism. She clearly points out in her autobiography -: "I was

burden and a responsibility neither my parents nor my grandmother could put up with for long. Therefore with the blessing of all, our marriage was fixed". Again highlighting, the status the women occupy in contemporary times and their continuous struggle to live a life of equality. Rama Rani Lal, confirms, "In My Story she attempts to define her identity as a woman and to create a space within her and around her in order to assert the legitimacy of her dreams and fantasies and to express her hopes and frustrations."

Her feminine urges identify that makes her curious as she ultimately goes to the extent of questioning her father . She is blunt enough to ask - "Father, I ask you now without fear Did you want me Did you ever want a daughter Did I disappoint you much with my skin as dark as yours." Likewise, another of her statement says- " What I am able to give is only what your wife is qualified to give. We are all alike, We women, in our wrappings of hairless skin." Thereby, encircling her very identity with a question mark as she begins to become conscious and aware that the suppression she faces might be due to her various identities-gender, dark skin and female . Thus , "History has been a record of male experience, written by men from male perspectives. What has been deemed so according to a valuation of power and activity in public world....It is therefore imperative for historians of women to reconstruct the female experience and fill the blank pages and make the silence speak."

### CONCLUSION:

In the end, it is correct to state that the writer Kamala Das in her search of identity as woman in feministic perspectives. Infact , her feminist consciousness succeeds in standing apart because of its explicit tone as she brings to the forefront openly her torment , frustrations and trauma . A Critic C.R. Nambiar, shares his thoughts on the relevance of Kamala Das poetry, "She becomes a feminist writer by making her women conscious and providing them wings to rise and flutter... The essence of her poems is struggle about her own self and... is a cry for freedom"

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