



## **The Feminine Sensibility and Kamla Das: A Critical Appraisal**

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### **Abstract:**

In India's postcolonial era, Kamala Das stood out as a leading feminist figure. Poet Kamala Das writes about being a woman who has had sexual relationships with other men besides her spouse. Kamala Das's poetry on her husband's character and personality is when her feminine sensitivity comes through. The tone of "The Old Playhouse" and her other poetry is decidedly feminine. Her husband's sexual advances violated her sense of femininity. If her husband only wants to satiate his lust, a strong woman can tell him so. In "The Sunshine Cat", Kamala Das's portrayal of her husband as a greedy, cowardly guy who does not love her enough stems from her innately feminine sense. She claims her spouse confined her to the house, and the only companionship he provided was a yellow cat she likens to a ray of sunshine. Her poems have a feminine tone because of the prevalence of stereotypically female imagery and motifs. Her poetry is distinctly feminine in tone and subject matter. Her poetry is beautiful because it combines female protest with gentle tenderness.

### **Keywords:**

Feminist, Sensibility, Protest, Kamla Das, Poems, *My Story*.

### **Introduction**

The Indian feminist movement and Kamala Das are inseparable. She did an excellent job of using her writing to capture the feelings of everyday women. She always sought to bring attention to contentious issues in Indian society, especially women's suffering. Kamala Das's biography and writing are inseparable; one cannot be understood without the other. Kamala Das knows first-hand how terrible it is when tragedy strikes a family. Her marriage was an entangled



mess. She has seen many marriages end in divorce during her lengthy life. Kamala Das went through emotional upheaval as her marriage ended. As the blind patriarchy trampled on her aspirations, fears, and worries, she felt its crushing weight. She summoned all her energy to make sense of the confusion surrounding some of the most hotly contested books in Indian English literature.

The poetess takes exception to male superiority and its degrading implications. No one cares about the woman's goals since she is expected to fulfil certain conventional expectations. Conversational cadence and vocabulary can have a role in conveying discord. It represents every woman's fight against the hegemony of men's egos. Poems by Kamala Das offer a refreshingly honest look at the female experience. She forsakes the norm in favour of a singular approach to life in her dedication to innovation and forward-thinking.

The two poems Kamala Das wrote following the birth of her son reveal her feminine sensibilities. Before and after a child's birth, the poem "Jaisurya" conveys the most important emotions a mother might experience. Her poetry is aimed towards female readers due to its stereotypically feminine topics, imagery, and symbolism. She thinks that both the male and female bodies are gifts from God that should be treasured. Her poetry is distinctly feminine in tone and subject matter. She is alluring and vulnerable at the same time. She has a powerful emotional personality and struggles constantly to keep it under check. For instance, the poet's perspective on forgiveness in the poem *Composition* illustrates the Indian woman's point of view. She claims to have reached an age of maturity where she can forgive anyone, including her friends and those who have wronged them. Indeed, in her writing, she skillfully balances bold female protest and gentle female urges.

Protest poetry is one way to describe her writings. Her protest was in reaction to centuries of mistreatment and exploitation of Indian women. She criticises Indian women in her poem "The Conflagration" for believing their place is a pillow for an angry man to cry on. She tells the women that the world's importance outweighs their husbands' stature. As a result, her poetry



seeks to advance social justice and the individual's development. Her poetry has attained respect rarely seen among English-language women writers.

Kamala Das is well-known as a singer who challenges norms on gender and sexuality. These norms do nothing to advance the status of women and instead contribute to a pervasive undervaluing of women in this primarily male culture. When men have positions of power, women are less likely to speak their minds. To paraphrase what K.R.S. Iyengar says about Kamala Das: "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." Her words:

“A man to love is easy, but living

Without him afterwards may have to be faced.” (The Looking Grass)

Because her feminine sense directs and controls her poetry, it has a unique voice. Kamala Das's feminine intuition sees past appearances in her search for an authentic romantic or emotional connection. She cannot be happy unless she knows she is loved. Every time she is rejected by true love, it makes her sick to her stomach:

“Who can

Help us who have lived so long

And have failed in love?” (The Freaks)

The poems in which Kamala Das portrays her husband's attitude and behaviour are the most potent and intense examples of her feminine sensibility. Her poems, particularly "The Old Playhouse," are undeniably feminine. Her husband's sexual advances violated her sense of femininity. It was lust, not love, that drove him to make love. A strong lady would never withhold her wrath from a selfish spouse who only wants her for his gratification. The man who sucked on her lips and probed her every curve and crevice had no love feelings for her.



The poem "Jaisurya" captures some of the most profound emotions a new mother might experience before and after giving birth. The poem's handling of pregnancy and parenting requires a woman's perspective to understand fully. The poetess's new role as a mother filled her with joy. What a lovely expression of the female point of view!

“And then wailing into light

He came, so fair, a streak of light trust  
Into the fading light.”(Jaisurya)

Kamala Das's love poetry reflects the damage that an absence of love has done to her feminine intuition. When she assumes the role of Radha and waits for Krishna to end her suffering love, Kamala Das's feminine intuition shines through in her poetry.

Kamala Das, as a trailblazing writer, distinguishes out from the crowd. The Indian first picked up on the longing, eroticism, and audacity in her proclamation of being a woman in her words. Her poetry is the most authentic manifestation of her edgy authority. A woman who writes in this genre reveals intimate details about her physicality, instincts, possessions, and libidinal desires for males. The insensitivity, heartlessness, and sexuality of men are among the most painful experiences a woman may have.

“How can my love hold him when the other

Flaunts a gaudy lust, and is Lioness  
To his beast?” (A Losing Battle)

### **Women's Rights and Kamala Das**

Kamala Das is well-known for the passionate tone of her writing. She is a controversial figure among Indian poets for her forthright treatment of female sexuality and naivete, even though her poetry is often introspective and personal. In contrast to other writers, his poetry does not include "the novel of the 19th century, feeling, and romantic love," Her poetry resounds with the note and tone of a defiant woman as she openly explores her place in a male-dominated culture and its pervasive traditional patriarchal traditions, where "a woman is not born, Rather,



she becomes a woman," Her poetry books have taken on a life of their own. She has graduated from the role of the poet. Using straightforward words, she investigates Indian women's silence and attacks patriarchal dominance. Insofar as sex and desire are discussed in Indian society, where women are expected to provide them unconditionally despite being stigmatised for doing so, Kamala Das uses them as a kind of defiance in her poems.

“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)

Kamala Das's poetry of protest against social conventions and against the limitations and restrictions that spouses or society have a prominent place on women suggests her support for the rights of all women to an equal experience with such freedom, which she pursued and achieved. It also stresses the significance of listening to and protecting the rights of Indian women. There is little doubt that these poems' resentment and anger reflect her perception of social injustice.

So, it is fair to say that Kamala Das is a fierce and committed feminist. She may be seen as a strong supporter of women's rights and a movement champion to end women's subordination to men in the home. When Kamala Das wrote these poems, the movement to free women from male authority was starting or in its middle stages (in the 1960s and 1970s of the 20th century). The movement has been wildly successful, far exceeding the hopes of its female leaders. While extramarital affairs may not have been discussed when Kamala Das wrote her poems, Indian



women were expected to be submissive to their parents or spouses. Indian women are just as free as their Western counterparts in the United Kingdom and the United States. Kamala Das was among the few pioneering women to declare and wield this autonomy to its fullest extent.

### **Female Protest**

The social and emotional components of women's prisons are laid out in *My Story*, a confessional poem written by a confessional poetess. Women in India's so-called "system of arranged marriage" have it rough, which is *My Story*'s main idea. Her poetry also delves into how males interact with and take advantage of women. She had a "rebellious spirit" with "profound" and "deep" concern for the "deprived, the poor, and the exploited." Kamala Das says:

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

As a result of Kamala Das's work as a confessional poet, women are more open about their repressed sexual inclinations and marital dissatisfaction. So, for a little while at least, she is given women a reason to stand up and not be silenced. Kamala Das takes on the persona of a feminist in these introspective poems, implicitly advocating for women's liberation from traditional standards and taboos.

### **Revolting Feminine Sensibility**

Among Kamala Das's poems, those in which she describes her husband's treatment and temperament are the most potent and unambiguous examples of her feminine sense. In her poem "The Freaks," Kamala Das complains that she and her husband have been together for a long time, but they have never fallen in love, leaving her with an empty feeling in her heart like a cistern. Then, to save face, she calls herself a "freak" and says that her "grand, flashy lust" seldom manifests itself. Kamala Das's perception of her husband as a self-centred, timid guy who neither loved nor exploited her adequately stems from her innate sensitivity as a woman, which she credits to The Sunshine Cat. Her words:

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“Her husband shut her,

In every morning, I 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)

While her husband treated her like a prisoner, she had only her yellow cat (or a ray of sunlight) for company. For a man searching for sexual satisfaction, she was now "a frigid and half-dead lady" thanks to his treatment.

The poet Kamala Das argues in her poem "A Losing Battle" that women should utilise the cheapest bait available to entice males into their traps. The pleading in a poem titled "The Conflagration" for women's freedom from male dominance is even more vibrant and unrestrained.

In this piece, Kamala Das asks whether or not being in bed with a guy is the pinnacle of happiness, and then she advises women to find their own identities so they can thrive beyond the confines of a lover or husband. The poems above are not the only ones Kamala Das has written that speak to her feminism and defiance of patriarchal authority. Kamala Das takes an untraditional view of marriage, as was previously mentioned. She thinks her husband is just playing a game with her. When she begrudgingly discusses how marriage has restricted her independence, her female ego emerges. Of Calcutta is a poem about the emotional anguish she experiences due to her marriage. In this poem, she claims that her spouse kept her warm at night by talking to her with a walkie-talkie. She felt like a circus dog in training who had gone through worse, and she inquired:

“Here in my husband’s home,

I am a trained circus dog

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

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

Kamala Das's marriage ended in divorce because her husband used her for his sexual pleasure and never showed her any real love or compassion. She has detailed how her husband's cold and robotic attitude to sexual activity with her satisfies her desire but leaves her feeling unloved and unappreciated. This lack of love and affection is a source of her great disappointment, anguish, and even agony.

These poems show Kamala Das's hatred toward her husband and the outrage of other women in similar situations. Kamala Das's poetry is characterised by protest, sadness, scorn, despair, and fury. Her critic says her unrestrained poetry expresses the poet's pain from living in a harsh, artificial world. The old virtues of virginity, submissiveness, and dependence on males may be understood as having been abandoned in her announcement of a new morality. Women like Kamala Das today are out to dismantle traditional notions of male superiority and power.

## **Conclusion**

Kamala Das is also famous for her openness in her writing. The importance of women's rights is a central theme in her poems. All the lyrics feature strong female protagonists who explore feminist themes. There is a distinction between feminist writing and feminine writing. Female authors in Indian English literature who explore female identities and forms of resistance help women and men develop a more progressive worldview. However, feminism in literature typically reflects a view of female superiority. The significance of the textbook is grounded in the quality of the writing rather than in the concept behind it. Feminist scholarship develops in response to patriarchy and other chauvinist beliefs. Poet Kamala Das specialises in the erotica and love poetry genres. Not all conventional or outmoded ideas are out of place in her love poetry; in fact, most of it relies on them. She takes a stand on doubt, love, and gender, which is well-known and visible as an interstitial subject in her poems.





Therefore, Kamala Das is a contemporary Indian writer aware of her vision and the responsibility to sustain it. An undeniably feminist viewpoint is presented, one that speaks out against the limitations placed on women and their ability to achieve their goals. She writes openly about relationships, sexuality, and marriage, which are central to her experience. Her poetic voice, which she has developed through time, is filled with a feministic, womanist ideology. Kamala Das, a writer on oppressed women, centres much of her poems on the history of the female senses. Her opposition to the oppression of women and her interest in exploring how gender is shaped in society and culture permeates nearly all of her writings. She proved that women and men have remarkably similar lives. Almost all of Kamala Das's poems are protest poems that offer a strong message of feminism in a personal tone, earning her the reputation as a "furious feminist poet."

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