

Aspects of Feminism in The Works of Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das

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Abstract

This research paper is an attempt to elaborate the feminist aspects in the selected work of Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das. In the proposed research paper, the work of Sylvia Plath "Widow" is a poem about the sadness suffering of the widow after the death of her husband. This poem is autobiographical, but at the same time its universal. Another poem by Plath "Mushroom" highlighting their struggle against domestic expectation and male dominated society. Kamala Das's poems explore female subjectivity, male ego, and societal structure that always subordinate women, in her "An Introduction" and "The old playhouse" she expresses the oppression of women and declaration of her agency by claiming the title "I" for herself.

The aim of paper is not only to advocate the women right but to raise them equally as men. Irrespective of their caste, creed, color.

1. Introduction

Sylvia Plath: Life and Works- Sylvia Plath (27 October 1932 – 11 February 1963) was an American poet, novelist, and short story writer. Her most notable achievement was the genre of her confessional poetry, which often reflected her intense emotions and her struggle with depression. Despite her complex background and life, she has won her posthumous Pulitzer Prize and continues to be a popular and widely studied poet.

Kamala Surayya/Das (born Kamala; 31 March 1934 – 31 May 2009), popularly known by her one-time pen name Madhavikutty and married name Kamala Das, was an Indian poet in English as well as an author in Malayalam from Kerala, India. Her fame in Kerala primarily stems from her short stories and autobiography, My Story, whereas her body of work in English, penned under the pseudonym Kamala Das, is renowned for its poems and candid autobiography. Her works are known for originality, versatility and indigenous flavour of the soil. She was also a widely read columnist and wrote on diverse topics including women's issues, child care and politics.

Sylvia Plath as A Feminist Writer - Sylvia Plath is one of the writers who has endorsed femininity in all walks of life, even in her poems called Sylvia Plath's feminism. She sees women as equal to men. She raised her voice against the rule of men. Sylvia always believes that society is depriving women of their legal and ethical rights. Society should give women the same status as men. As a woman, she feels responsible for fighting for women's rights. Sylvia Plath is widely considered a foundational figure in

modern feminist literature due to her vivid portrayal of female oppression and the struggles against patriarchal society, particularly through her confessional poetry and semi-autobiographical novel, *The Bell Jar*. While she did not identify as a feminist during her lifetime, her unflinching exploration of female identity, anger, and limited choices profoundly influenced the second-wave feminist movement that emerged after her death.

Kamala Das as Feminist Writer – Kamala Das is considered a feminist poet for her exploration of female desire, sexuality, and struggles against patriarchal constraints. Through confessional poetry that reflects her personal life, she boldly challenged societal norms and advocated for women's independence and self-expression, making her a pioneering voice in Indian feminism. Her work is characterized by a defiant tone and an unapologetic portrayal of female sensibility and a woman's yearning for love and freedom.

Feminist Aspect in Sylvia Plath's Poems Widow and Mushroom

In "widow" Sylvia Plath explores the sufferings of women who suffers the death of the man who is closest to them. She portrays the pain that widow feels after her husband's death and relates it to her own troubled relationship. Widows are pictured as suffused with immense amount of sadness. They devote their lives to the memory of their departed husbands and are lacking hope and positivity about their present lives. Plath split from her husband who was English poet Ted Hughes because of his adultery so she is not writing autobiographically about widowhood. However, she may have felt stranded, lonely and obsessed with her disloyal husband after their separation. Plath may also be exploring the connection between being a widow and a victim of adultery. In her poem "Mushrooms," Plath sees mushroom growth, determination, and population growth as a woman's struggle for status, self-rule, and, sovereignty, as she sees, the inescapable controlling of the majority. Side by side.

Feminist Aspect in Kamala Das, S Poems an Introduction, The Old Play House

An Introduction displays universal alienation which is based on the sexual, social and artistic aspects. It depicts what, in the article titled 'Feminist Ethos in Kamala Das's Poetry' by Dr. G. Charyulu says "She [Kamala Das] was bitterly wounded by her patriarchal prejudice ever from her childhood days which lead to unhappy and dissatisfied life . It voices the longing and complaint of a woman who represents all women and she complains against Man who represents every man. She says:

I met a man, loved him. Call

Him not by any name, he is every man

Who wants a woman, just as I am every

Woman who seeks love. (Lines 43-46)

The poetess speaks about the growth of her body from an immaturity to the maturity. She frankly writes about the process of maturity and manifestation of changes in woman's body. The poetess tries to convey the mundane atrocities which the Indian women undergo. As per the poetess when a girl reaches its maturity she longs for love. Instead of receiving the love she is considered to be a burden and married to a man who is inexperienced in the art of love making and is in dark about the psyche of woman.

The poem “The old Playhouse” addresses the speaker’s oppression in the patriarchal society where the speaker compares a woman to a bird “swallow” who is being planned to be “tame” by her lover. The word “tame” in the poem is a bold expression of captivity and control which the speaker voices out to highlight the lover to be dominated while caging her “nature, the urge to fly, and the endless/Pathways of the sky”. The lines are suggestive of the superiority of a man and overlooking of a woman’s desire to pursue her dreams.

Conclusion

This study places particular emphasis on the contribution of feminism to women's lives and what women should have on an equal footing. Undoubtedly, Kamala Das and Sylvia Plath use different types of imagery, metaphors and symbolism to emphasize feminist themes in their works and poetry. Her work reflects her childhood life. Sylvia Plath was one of the people whose problems and troubled life not only led to her suicide, but also influenced most of her work. Sylvia Plath's poems often deal with dark themes, reflecting her problematic relationship with her father, female oppression, and her own experience of depression. No doubt Kamala Das's "An Introduction" concludes by rejecting societal pressures to conform to traditional roles, using the repeated "I" to assert her individual identity and demand equality. The poem's feminist conclusion is a forceful protest against the patriarchal society that expects women to be passive, subservient, and defined by their relationships, advocating for female autonomy and authentic self-expression over stifling social conventions.

Thus, in conclusion, we can say that the poems can be studied from the feminist perspective. The confessional tone in the poems heightens the bold self-expression of the poet and her vocal against the oppression faced in the patriarchal society. The poems emphasize on the gender roles and identity and tries to break away from the construct and dissociates the role of gender from sex. Hence, “The Old Playhouse” serves as an expression of one’s individuality, self and role in the society and a quest for self-identity.

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