



WORDS AS WEAPONS: A FEMINIST STYLISTICS ANALYSIS OF KAMALA DAS' SELECTED POEMS

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Abstract

The study of linguistic sexism or gender discriminations is effective in eliminating the stereotypic images out of the mind of the individual; and, hence, the study of sexism in language is worthwhile. This paper aims at determining whether the language employed in characterizing the men and the women who appear in the poem Kamala has employed is biased or not. It also carried out its research on the basis of the toolkits of feminist stylistics as given by Sara Mills. The language of and with the aid of the Purposive sampling method of a qualitative research, the personal experience of the main characters of the novel will be analyzed.

At sentence/phrase level, there are nine (09) poems of Kamala in the discourse level. It could come up with the results that men are also represented poorly besides women, however women are being stated in a more demeaning and derogatory manner than men. The women are paraded as women who are locked in and caged up in their rooms and homes as housewives. They are given their role to play so that they can take care of their husbands who are their passive cooks and sex objects. Besides that, they are also depicted on their beds engaging in love making with their male partners in their embrace. The men on the other hand play the role of the husband who tames and dominates the woman. Either they are portrayed as spinning the webs to ensnare the woman or they are fiddling with the body organs of their lovers as woman.

Keywords: the problem of sexism in the language, facing discrimination because of gender, stereotypical ideas, Feminist

Stylistics

Introduction

Kamala Das was one of the most melodramatic and self autobiographical writers in Indian English poetry world because she had been called ecstatic exploration of female subjectivity and sexuality and female identity. The characters of her poetry are both personal and tremendously passionate in that it has brought the inside world to the fore in a world that has suppressed women in their patriarchal cultures. The nine poems which I have chosen to analyze are the personifications of this contradiction of the will and within as the societies lay down and as such this makes an effective object of critical inquiry in respect to a study of how words can be deployed to reinforce, prop, or resist normative conceptions of gender. It is against this background that the said study looks forward to analyzing poetic corpus of Kamala Das within the context of the feminist stylistics and bring out how the individual stylistic preferences of Das have been employed to sensitize the gender plays.



The study is theoretically based on the Feminist Stylistics theory proposed by Sara Mills that provides tools to analyze textual and linguistic means with which the representation of ideological gender is coded. The scheme that came up of Mills escapes the attention of the feminist domains of critique, and sets the focus on a micro-linguistic description, in the process of characterization, metaphor, fragmentation and cataloguing. This will allow looking more closely into the means through which language itself could be used not to merely reproduce but produce gender identities and relations of power within texts. Such a stylistic frame is particularly appropriate in order to examine such a poem by Kamala Das since the emphasis between the expectations of the society and the free individual will of the speaker is more vivid due to the combination of the form and the meaning.

The analysis given in this paper is to be based on the four main stylistic devices used in the given work proposed by Mills cough characterization of Kamala and fragmentation of men and women sexist metaphors, and listing of gendered experiences. Through characterization, the paper will look at the manner Das through creation of characters establishes various characters of women and men and how they give prominence to the psychological muddy situations and alienation of women. The subject of both genders that is man and woman is even more fragmented in its very core through the stylistic device of fragmentation that is focused in the unstable and contradictory gender roles. Moreover, in Kamala Das the metaphor has usually become the picture of inadvertent sexism or at the same time, the channel of protest against the patriarchal repression.

The final catalogue technique enables to pursue a logical study of the means Das uses to gather and title the features associated with men and women, and as a result, the exhaustive study of moral and cultural symbols personified in the language of poetry. The research would also produce new knowledge on the stylistic workings through which Kamala Das had controlled her poetic identity and a criticism of the institutionalisation of gender power by using these tools of feminist stylistic devices on the nine selected poems. The point is that this work proves the efficiency of the female stylistics being one of the means that can help to see into crossover of the language, gender, and ideology in contemporary poetry.

1.1 Research Questions

1. How do the characters in the nine poems selected by the author Kamala Das allow her to construct gender identities and also expose the power relations of being a man and being a woman?
2. What is fragmentation and sex metaphors as a stylistic device in describing experiences and psychological states of men and women in the poems of Kamala Das?
3. How do the poems of Kamala Das catalogue male/female traits in resisting or reacting to patriarchal ideology according to the theory of Feminist stylistics illustrated by Sara Mills.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To be able to discuss the phenomenon of characterization used in both poems selected by Kamala Das and its influence on the establishment of gender identities and relations.
2. To examine the stylistic devices of fragmentation and sexist metaphors in Das poetry and how they have a role to play in showing gendership and gendered conflicts.



3. To understand the pattern of the listing of male and female traits in the selected poems and consider how the extent to which the listings do or do not, deny or conform to patriarchal ideas with a feminist stylistic study.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The relevance of the proposed research is explained by the fact that sexism or the gender based language fits as the reinforcement of the gender discrimination in the contemporary patriarchal society. In its report, released by World Economic Forum (WEF), Pakistan ranked on the 153 rd position out of 156 countries under gender parity index. It is so heartbreaking to state that the country has even been ranked the 7th out of the eight South Asian allied countries only behind Afghanistan (DAWN, March 31, 2021). Over the last ten years, the extent of the domestic violence and oppression of women even increased. With the increments of the oppression against women and the domestic violence, Aurat Azadi March was born; and presently this March takes place every year. Thus, looking into the history of domestic violence and gender discrimination in any literature or otherwise is quite significant. In regard to the topic of gender discrimination and violence against women, acknowledging it in any text material would stimulate a difference among the minds of the people. Moreover, it would wipe out the stereotypes of gender in the society and call a red alert to all people about this looming menace. The issue of gender also falls within the research area that looks into gender biased language in poetry of Kamala Das.

1.4 Study limitations

Delimitation Overview The current work is limited to feministic stylistics of the poet Kamala Das, her poetry collection of selected poems, i. e. Introduction, The Looking Glass, The Sunshine Cat, The Testing of Sirens, The Old playhouse, The Stone Age, summer in Calcutta, The Maggots, and The Freaks. Depending on sexual and feministic character of them, these poems are selected out of all the poetic works published by Das and explored at two levels such as phrase/sentence and level of discourse only. One time the researcher will identify three instruments of each level.

2. Literature Review

Kamala Das is an eminent author who is famous as one of the leading authors of the Indian English literature that presents in her poetry the confessional nature; uncivilized rendition of femininity; demeaning female sexuality, and the disparity of existence. Devindra Kohli (1975) explains that Das can be described as a poet of the body and soul because she is certain to seek the struggle between real life requirement and soul rest in her poems. Other critics (like P. K. Rajan 1993) proceed to state further that the poetry of Das depicts the psychological harm experienced by women locked within a repressive social hierarchy and that subjective experience is used to represent a type of perspective through which the issues of women are turned into universalized. They demonstrate themes that represent the prosperity of Das that renders Das the ground that can be correspondent richly by means of gender in literature.

Feminist stylistics is among the new interpretive activities on gender ideologies that has been carried out by recording the language materials in agreement with the scholarly work on Das. The first luminary on this field of inquiry was Sara Mills (1995) who envisaged that linguistic manifestation and, consequently, naming, character portrayal, metaphor and narrative structure



carry ideological meanings and affect the attitude of the readers regarding gender roles and relations. Compared to thematic feminist criticism, feminist stylistics created by Mills can deal with role of linguistic choices of the authors in a micro-level hence giving a deeper understanding on how the patriarchal discourse of the texts is constructed and how the texts counter the discourse. The theoretical approach provides a dignified frame to the analysis of stylistic strategies of Kamala Das whether or not they are concerned with the thematical elements.

The results of all the research conducted on the topic of feminist stylistics and literary texts display how this approach can be used to trace a pattern of concealed ideology. In one such instance, authors like Jeffries (2010), Toolan (1997) manifested that when texts are treated as a feminist stylistics, the subtle sexism lived in the innocence of terminologies emerges. In the South Asian scene these methods are currently also extended to the literature of the region, albeit only to some degree in Indian English poetry, and to the poetry of Kamala Das. Such a lapse signals the need to special research on the role of the means of stylistics employed in the Das poetry in the construction of gendered identity and a confrontation of the patriarchal norms.

Despite the fact that the topics of Kamala Das sexuality, identity, and rebellion had been addressed in the literature exhaustively, there is still more to be said about the contribution of the stylistic means in her delivery of the feministic thoughts. Other researchers such as Anisur Rahman (2009) and Seema Singh (2013) acknowledge the importance of linguistic creativity in the poetry of Das, however, they generalize quite a lot in this issue. I wish in this paper to fill that gap by applying the feminist stylistic tools developed by Sara Mills to nine poetry of Kamala Das selected. To this end, the study shall attempt to unveil the way linguistic and stylistic choices Das utilizes to bargain gendered power relations actively and render the female subject in this poetic language.

3 Methodology

The parameters of the current research are that of a qualitative one. The author digs into the texts of the selected poems of Kamala Das as of the primary source of the Datum, and the respective studies, books, journals became the secondary source of information of the researcher. The language of the text is threaded with the employment of the feminist stylistics tools kits that were presented by Sara Mills in her book named Feminist Stylistic.

3.1 Collection Tools of data

The Researcher has made the selection of nine poems of Kamala Das, e.g. Introduction, The Looking Glass, The Sunshine Cat, The Testing of Sirens, The Old playhouse, The Stone age. Summer in Calcutta, The Freaks and The Maggots.” It is based on sexual and feminist intentions of different objects of poetry of Kamala Das that these poems are picked up.

3.2 Sample

The list of poems used in the sample of the present research is made up of nine poems written by Kamala Das; they were chosen as they can be addressed on the basis of their linguistic and thematic coloring achieved in relation to the gender representation. The selection of these poems was not an accident and the poems consist of various stylistics and thematic concerns that Das in her works focuses on namely female desire, marital disappointment, issues of identity and critique of patriarchal norms. This decision allows one to use its poems so that the role of stylistic instruments under consideration, as well as characterization, fragmentation, and sexist



metaphors, and the list of men and women are shown in an adequate way. The chosen poems constitute a certain group according to which the researcher will be in a position to apply methodically the tools of feminist stylistics to identify the paradigm of gendered identities and play of power that was enforced through the use of words and style in poems by Das.

3.3 Framework Model

The current paper is grounded in the Feminist Stylistics Theory by Sara Mills (1995) that has been identified as the most valid theory underpinning the investigation. The difference between the approach used by Mills and traditional feminist criticism is in the transformation of the thematic interpretations of texts on one hand and micro-level analysis of linguistic elements and effects of style on the other hand. It highlights how naming, characterization, metaphor, fragmentation and cataloging can contribute through codification, subversion and reification of gendered ideologies in literary works. The study uses this framework with four specific instruments to interpret each presence of Kamala Das building imagery of the male and female characters (1), linguistic discontinuity as a manifestation of the fragmented identities of the men and women (2), sexist metaphors in creating or opposing male and female imagery through definition (3), and cataloguing that aims at defining any major grouping or stereotyping used against the male and female characters in the poems of Das (4). In this light, the paper tries to find the stylistic means through which Kamala Das expresses the gendered experiences and explores the social systems of oppression that limit the female identity.

4. Results and Discussion

This chapter is the pendulum swing of position of man and woman, division of body of man and woman, the doers and the recipients of the action, the discriminative metaphors and the stock sexist clippings spoken around both the sexes and finally the survey in the selected poems of Kamala Das.

4.1: Kamala and her Poetical Characterizations

Just like the language of other poets, poetic language of Das is sexist at least in one measure in that it is hostile to women as a special category. The male and the female image in *The Looking Glass* are not fairly portraitured. The former are depicted as rather more powerful and the latter ones are painted relative to their sexual appeal and beauty. She has overextended on the hair and the breasts especially in the creation of the female character; she has even mentioned the musk of the perspiration between the breasts, the menstrual blood to describe the sexuality of a woman.

The smell the smell Of which woman Makes thee To him give that effect Makes thee To him give.

Long hair musk of the breasts between
The hot ...

The never-ending Female hunger (Piciucco, 2001, p. 32).

On the same note, Das has employed phrases such as softer, younger and lovelier (Piciucco, 2001, p.32) in order to portray the females as being as delicate as delicate things are beautiful as well as being feeble in terms of strength. The stereotypical description attached to these words is used to define the female who owns the body. True to the form of the female character, the male character in *The Looking Glass* is not



devoid of a bit of stereotyping either. Male has been designed by the female poet based on his limbs.

She has asked the female to look at the perfection of the limbs of the male; and thereby acknowledge that he was stronger and herself was the softer and weaker. Stand

in front of him nude through the glass,

as it were that ...

And so he thinks and he a good deal more

More quiet, more plain, more pretty. Be bold to say you like

Consider the beauty in his limbs (Piciucco, 2001, p. 32).

The woman character in the sunshine cat is negative too. This (stereotype) is ascribed to the fact that it is just like that of the female gender, the weak one compared to male. They are subordinated to the male at his level in layman terms. Kamala Das is also deprived of such stereotypes when she creates the female image in her poem. The Cat in the Sun. She has portrayed a weaker female as compared to the male. Her husband has been depicted stronger and superior and that of a wife as weaker and inferior: "Her husband locked her inside every morning, locked her in a room of books (Piciucco, 2001, p.42). The verse indicates that, the men had dominated the women. Moreover, it also shows the concern of the women on the domestic field. In this connection even the researcher (Anushree Joshi, the researcher, (p.07) believed that the figurative prison of the wife is the literal prison of the wife in domesticated private sphere.

Besides Das has also brought out the weeping picture of the woman on the bed and sitting mode which gives a pointer that indeed the woman is a prisoner in her bed or quarters and she is very weak: it was a bed made down, with tears, and she lay their weeping (Piciucco, 2001, p.42). Discrimination against a woman as a housewife may be observed in such a poetic verse.

Besides, The Testing of Sirens article will disclose the sexist inclination of the selected representation especially on the part of the female character. The single women character who perhaps could be the poetess herself in the poem is shown within the home just like other women. It appears on her front door where she heard a rolleiflex camera and a pock-marked face telling her that they will be taking her to a drive or to the lake.

pock-marked face, A smile and a rolleiflex, on my doorstep.

Off we will....

Or go to lakes. and tried this side and that and finding what was good and what was bad, (The Testing of the Sirens, L.4-7)

On the same note, the females are ever stereotyped that they take so much time getting ready. Bringing the same woman stereotype in the mind of the viewer, Kamala Das in the Testing of Sirens has portrayed the female stereotype as a woman who washes her face with soaps and water and brushes her hair a dozen of times (L.8-9). The twelve strokes of hair brush does not mean female attractiveness only, but rather that the female puts time to do the hair brushing, to get clean face, etc. In addition to the foregoing she discloses the feminine in her six yards of printed voile.



And the behest of the males to the woman, who is Kamala Das in the poem: An Introduction, were to be a typical one in India; and in this sense, the text of the poem may be said to be sexist. By the time when the females of the poem, Kamala Das, has crushed under foot the social orders and clothed her female essence in trousers and shortened her hair, then the males have taught the female how to wear the saree and how to be a girl, a wife, a mother, an embroiderer, and a cook (Blackswan, 2004, p.26). In addition to this, she is asked to be one of the quarrelers and this refers to the misunderstanding that, women are quarrelsome.

Be wish woman, in sarees, Dress in be girl, they said.

Be embroiderer, be cook,

Quarreller with servants. Fit in. Oh,

Belong, ...

Upstairs on walls Or look in at our lace-draped windows.

Be Amy or be Kamala (Blackswan, 2004, p.26)

In this respect, Ishfaq Hussain Bhat (2017) referred to the quote that states that “The woman is not able to transform her body; therefore, the poet transforms her attire and endeavours to act like a man. The voices of the tradition ... sent her back into her expected gender roles: wife, cook, embroiderer, quarreller with servants (p.119). In addition, Anushree Joshi in her article in the given context implies that the use of the terms like saree, girl, wife, embroiderer, cook, and the likes in the specific content represents the forms of violence against women.

The term quarreler with servants provides a colorful description that is filled with glances, responsibilities, and behaviors that she should perform by virtue of her gender role in society. All the activities and the labors she is supposed to do as a female are all within the secluded realm of home (Joshi, p. 05). Moreover, according to the social norm of thinking a woman must not get involved in politics. The passage in the poem An Introduction describes this stereotypical belief in the first lines of the poem.

I do not know politics but I know the names

of those as people in authority, And are able to repeat them like

Week days or ...

I am Indian, really brown, born in Malabar (Blackswan, 2004, p.26)

The idea how women are kept in dark about politics in the society which is a maledominant society is suggested basically by the poetess herself who is a female character in the poem as the poetess herself claims to know about politics. The male forces controlled the Politics and it was regarded as a male field. Other than the above lines, the verse Don writes in English said they, English is/Not your mother-tongue/ why not leave also exhibits passive and subordination of a woman (Blackswan, 2004, p.26). The woman is offered in such passive a state that she could not even speak the language she would like to use. Moreover, even with regard to marriage, the female character as Kamala Das herself is portrayed as helpless in the poem entitled, An Introduction. Her father compels her to marry a teenager of sixteen. Because he took me to the/Bedroom and locked the door, he never thrashed me and he took a boy of 16 years of age (Blackswan, 2004, p.26).



The poem creates the dominance of the male character unlike that of the female. The line quoted in the upper line

These three words symbolize: he did not beat me, that is the power of a man. It reveals the male domination over women. The man will go ahead and whip the woman in case he feels like so.

The same case with sexism and discrimination can be seen in the story of Das in the summer in Calcutta (Blackswan, 2004, p.24). The poem has two characters which are; a woman and a husband. The woman has been stereotypically sketched. In the poem not only was the husband merely referred to as a ruler, but the woman herself termed herself as a passive woman to be ruled by the husband; a term she calls his reign: How brief the term of my devotion, how brief your reign (Blackswan, 2004, p.24).

In this case, the term reign can be understood as a ruler. The husband is regarded as the ruler who is ruling over the wife. The way the poetess names the rule or the reign of husband is a brief one; here she does not generalise this fact; and this way, does not demonstrate that the reign of each husband is brief. Rather, she maybe speaks of her own husband whom she was unhappily married to in a short time. The possessive pronoun your in the above lines is a reference to her husband who is the ruler of the wife.

Kamala Das used stereotypical characterization of Radha and Krishna in the publication, *The Maggots*, as another aspect of sexist lingo. In the story, there are two characters. One is Radha the female and the other one is Krishna who is a male. Radha has been displayed as an object/a commodity. She has been depicted in the arms of her husband that automatically advocates that she belongs to her husband. Radha felt dead that night she was in the arm of her husband (*The Maggot*, L.3). On this note, Rajeshwar Mittapalli and Pier Paolo Piciuccio (2007) in their book *Kamala Das, a Critical Spectrum* opined that Kamala Das was repressed because of failing to get a lover and seeking a true lover amidst a sea of philanderers is not working out. To find an eternal love therefore, she transforms herself to be Radha and consoles herself in the embraces of imaginary Krishna (p.60). In addition, they asserted that what Radha lives with her husband is similar to what happened to Kamala Das. Radha cannot find rapture in embrace of her husband, and she still stays as a dead body (p. 62).

In addition, Radha has also been shown in the light of a sexual object to her husband when her husband is kissing her and making love to her during the last time. This implies that the woman is merely being used as object of sexual satisfaction among men.

On river bank At sunset, Krishna

Amour last, and quitteth then ...

How do you mind my kisses, love? And she answered,

No, not in the least (Piciuccio, 2001, p. 62)

Similar to Radha, Krishna, the man is pictured as one who is dominant and is gripping his wife in his arms. He is shown as a lecherous man who has sex with his wife and kisses her last time.

It is the same in the case of Kamala Das; only here the man and the woman are seen in a negative light in the case of the poem *The Stone Age*. An old fat spider has been termed as the man as he is weaving webs of confusion (Blackswan 2004, p.51). It brings out the adverse notion that the men are evil predators or hunters since they ensnare the woman with their love/web. The spider word also symbolizes power and strength of a man being a predatory beast. The power of the man is so high that he effortlessly has his clutches on the woman. The



word also reflects the ability of man not to be smart enough to dominate the women. In this sense Deepasree Das Sarkar, the author of the researches, (2013) mentions that the shape of a fat spider lodged in the mind of the wife points out the evil character of man. In its turn, it is also the symbol of the fact that the love of man is like the web of the spider, who does just the work of the trap to its victim and also helps the spider to absorb the energy of its victim and render the latter dead. This is a process that leaves her at total reliance of the will of the man (p.16).

The woman on her part is stereotypically portrayed. She is depicted as the domestic of her husband. Her husband is putting things and boundaries to her; and so, he is labelled as being an ancient settler in the mind by his wife in the Stone Age (Blackswan 2004, p.51). Furthermore, the lady is depicted as a housewife in which her husband has constructed a shabby room. The husband has surrounded her with walls; and he has hence turned her into a bird of stone--a granite dove (L.3-4). In this connection A.N. Dwivedi (2000), the author of the book Kamala Das and her poetry, writes that the husband, an old spider, spins webs of confusion all around the wife and builds the barren dead wall of domesticity and by so doing he shoots the wife to a taxidermic bird, a granite dove (p.18). Also, Deepasree Das Sarkar (2013) writes that the husband in the Stone Age is not concerned with creating a human being out of his wife, he only puts the object to be more nice in the corner of the room. After that, she becomes the stone object or a granite dove (p.16).

The Old playhouse (Das, 2004, p.01) by Das is not any different as she indicates a form of prejudice and discrimination particularly towards women. Being the only wife in the poem, the wife is depicted in a fallacious way. She is put to the responsibility of a housewife and is educated to be a good servant to her husband. The attitude to the wife in the poem by Blackswan today, titled the Old Playhouse (2004) is such that she is regarded as a creature born to serve her husband. She is being instructed how to add sugar or saccharine into the tea of her husband and introduce vitamins tablets to her husband at an appropriate moment: I was taught to break Saccharine into your tea/ To offer at the right moment the vitamins L.13-14).

The metaphor, which presents dominance of the man over the woman, is used in the story, The Old Playhouse (Blackswan, 2004), where phrases such as “you planned to tame a swallow” (p.1) were used. In this case, the woman is likened to a small bird swallow which has been tamed and lured by man to forget the house of her parents as well as forget the fervor of flying. That swallow is here used symbolically to represent the docility, the physical insignificance, and the inferiority of the wife.

You were going to tame a swallow, to keep her

In a long summer of your love ...

The dwellings so abandoned...

And her temper and the desire to fly as well as the Pathways that never end of the sky (Blackswan, 2001, p.1).

The metaphor used above has humiliated the woman as it is a small swallow held in the hand with the chains of the husband. As far as the metaphor talked about above is concerned, A.N.Dwivedi (2000) comments, that the you in the poem could be, perhaps, the husband, who wants to tame the swallow as the woman represented in the poem; and therefore, take away her freedom of being natural to herself (p.14).

Besides the mentioned above lines of the poem *The Old Playhouse* (Blackswan, 2004), a verse is also proclaimed of the poem that says, your windows always shut (L.20); in other words, it is not possible to open the doors and the shutters, a woman cannot open the door and go out of her house. This is because; the man is superior to the woman; and thus, he refers to the lady (woman) as his wife and as his property.

In the *freaks*, the male and female characters are sketched in a negative manner the topic in a rather offbeat analysis (Blackswan, 2004, p.11). The male character in the *freaks* is, however, created with more contempt. In her drawing of the male character in poem, the poetess has indicated some form of repulsion about the male gender. The dominating ugly body of the man who is the husband in the poem is depicted to be talking to his wife on whom he is addressed silently. The hideous feature of the man is describe metaphorically. His mouth is referred to as a dark cavern and cheeks are referred to as stained by the sun and even his bright teeth are referred to as uneven and compared to stalactites (Blackswan, 2004, p.11). The description trend of this man indicates prejudice and scorn towards man gender.

He speaks of the sun-stained
Cheek To me his mouth, dusky,
Cavern, ...

Chipped teeth are shiny (Blackswan, 2004, p.11).

In addition, the man gender is also being degraded by the fact that a man is not allowed to rise above the fulfillment of lustful desire. The man is put in as the *Freaks* (Blackswan, 2004, p.11) who can only just simply use his fingers on the body of the woman giving him physical satisfaction and that is all he can do since he only lusts to get the physical pleasure.

. Desire.... Ass can this man with
Lightness of finger-tips frees
Nothing in addition ...

Lazy hungers of the skin? (Blackswan, 2004, p.11).

The woman, however, has her negative side as well, and the woman in the story is less negative as compared to the man in the *Freaks*. The woman has been treated as an object of man since her husband is just teasing her as he glides his fingers on her body to gratify his fleshly appetite (Blackswan, 2004, p.11).

4.2: Kamala's Fragmentation of Men and Women

In any text fragmentation is sexism, because it means unjust distribution of the female body to its anatomical parts when constituting her as an epistemographic object in a literature or non-literature work. It occurs when the characters in texts are introduced in consideration of their body parts rather than as people (Mill, 1995, p.207). As all the other poets, Das also has not done justice to the female body by dividing the whole body into pieces and parts in her poems. In the setting out of the female character in the story of the looking glass Das makes special emphasis on the hair, the breasts, the eyes and the ears of the feminine sex. In order to demonstrate the sexual charm of the woman, Das has described every part of her body of female



character once in the said poem. In short, the poetess has presented her heroine of the female sex by way of her physical body parts: The fragrance of long hair and musk of sweat between the breasts (Piciucco, 2001, p. 32). With these eyes, which have countenanced their search with these ears which only hear (Piciucco, 2001, p. 48). The long hair and the breast are the parts of the body that have been focused on forming the sexually attractive females depicted in the poetry. Inherently, the male body has been named twice in the poem twice and each time the following parts are mentioned: limbs and eyes:

Of his members, his eyes got red in the shower (The Looking Glass, L.08). Just like in the female part of the body, these male body parts are revealing the power of the man and not sexuality.

In the sunshine Cat fragmentation is evident too. But in this poem Das has dismembered the male body as compared to the female body. She particularly focuses on two body parts of the man; chest and hair on the chest of the man. All these parts of the male character are not negative in their representation. But in case it were the body parts of a female then the connotation would be negative. In the poem, Das has only referred to a single part of the female and that is her face. "Hanging to their chests on which new hair was growing" (Piciucco, 2001, p.42). She burrows her Face in their smells (Piciucco, 2001, p.42). In the verses mentioned earlier, the role of the female character has been depreciated. She has been depicted as being clung to the chests of a lot of men. The female character is thus described very cruelly and discriminatively.

Fragmentation of the female body, sexism is also present in the case of illustration of the female body in the story The Testing of the Sirens. In this poem Das has depicted the word picture of the female character by using the six parts of the female body namely limbs, face, hair, breast, eyes, and the eyelids: my limbs warm of love, (L. 5) washed my face, (L.11) brushed my hair.

"dusky breasts" (L.11), embrace my eyelids" (L:32) and eyelid-inside" (L.42). In this Presentation of the female character showing her body parts this shows the indication of sexuality of the female. Female characters have been given an elaborate description based on the parts they possess but Das has only mentioned the face of the male character without describing the rest of the parts in detail: I saw a pock-marked face (L.7).

Similarly, we may have fragmentation of female body in such poem which is sexist in the poem titled An Introduction (Blackswan, 2004) (p.26). It is there that the female character who possibly was none other than the poet herself is being divided into body parts. These are sexual features of an anatomy that suggest sexual attractiveness of a female character which could be Kamala Das herself; and therefore the use of sexual material behind the same. The poetess uses the limbs, the unfurled hair, the breasts, the womb and the female hair of the character in her introduction. This is how the female sexual attraction is shown on her body part.

... members of mine...

and ploughed and here and there a head of hair had started growing...

I was crushed by my womb and my breasts (Blackswan, 2004, p.26).

What is also similar is the case with introduction, the work titled Summer (Calcutta, Blackswan, 2004) makes a negative description of the woman character (p.24). This bad character is the single woman in this poem. It is Das who has dissected her body to pieces according to the



constituent of the body. She has mentioned four body parts namely: veins, lips, mind and hand: What royal poison on my veins doth work, That fills my mind (Blackswan, 2004, p.24).

The anatomical structures of the woman used in the poetic verses quoted in upper level are not merely to show beauty of the body but the flow of venom and the bubbles were touching her lips and this shows that the woman is being exposed sexually.

The pubis and the breasts of the female according to the poem the Stone Age (Blackswan, 2004) are demoralizing and demeaning the woman (p.51). The two sections have been outlined in the poem which exposed the manner in which women were used in an evil way.

These natural elements of the woman bodily structure are named because one needs to underline the sexuality of this female character. However, in the line Before it clasps my pubis/ He slumps against my breasts and sleeps (The Stone Age, L.19-20) pronoun he is employed but he refers to it which implies that it is the hand of the man.

The poetess has drawn some insinuations on Mrs. about some parts of the female body in what she termed as The Old Playhouse (Blackswan, 2004): you were indifferent with my body moving into it.../ you spit in my mouth/ and you flooded all the nooks and corners (The Old Playhouse, L.9-11).” In the above lines of poetry, you as a subject pronoun is used to refer to the man and possessivemy is used to refer to the woman. All these verses have been used to describe the female body part in a negative manner that is sexy. They are presented as such that they should be treated like these are body parts that will treat a male.

The poem the Maggot (p.62) does not have any further fragmentation of the men and women (Mittapalli & Piciuccio, 2007). She has agrees the weapons of the male by no means, but presents a complete view of the female body and not in pieces: that night in her husband arms Radha felt so dead (The Maggot, L.3-4). The body of Radha is in the arm of her husband and such portrayal of a character of a woman is demeaning.

There is also sexism in terms of fragmentation as is evidenced on the freaks (Blackswan, 2004, p.11).

The man is more dissected in the said poem as compared to the woman. The morphological components of body have assisted the poetess in bringing the picture of the male character using words. She has presented the man character with his cheeks, his mouth, his teeth, his hands and the finger tips. All these parts of the male body are delivered negatively. His mouth has been called a black cave, his cheeks has been called sun stain cheeks, his teeth has been called uneven stalactites and his finger tips has been named nimble as it goes swishing across the body of the bride (Blackswan, 2004, p.11). The woman is not as separated into her part as man. The poetess has mentioned nothing of the knee, and the feminine heart. The female body in the poem presents the knee reflecting the sexual attraction of females.

4.3: Kamala's Sexist Metaphors

Metaphors are also sexist because these are brought to life through gender biasness that is usually targeted at the female gender in formulation. According to Mills (2005), sexuality is generally uttered metaphorically concerning whether it is hot or not. In this respect it is noted that Mills has given the example of metaphors like Sally is a block of Ice, she is a warm person (p.109). The two metaphors are indicative of the female sexuality. A progression on the analysis of the first metaphor is made where the woman, Sally is compared to block of ice because she



does not get hot; and as a result, she does not enjoy sex. The latter woman is referred to as a warm person as compared to Sally since he was keen on sex.

There is plenty of discrimination and contrasting between the men and women made by Kamala and manifested in her poems. These are however referred to as being compared so as to illustrate their sexuality. In one of her poems called the Looking Glass there is no figuration on the contrary it is simile. The poetess has also used a figure of speech referred to as simile to illustrate the beauty and sexuality of female gender. She has also drawn allusion to the use of female body as a comparison to the burnished brass: "Your Body where once under his hand had shone like burnished brass now drab and destitute" (The Looking Glass, L.23-24). The example used to establish the idea is a female young body which is a burnished brass when it is contacted by a male but when it is useless it is called drab and destitute. Burnished brass is a metal, which looks incredibly sharp and smooth with a bright appearance when the metal is polished afterwards. The setting female body in the times of youth is said to be extremely useful to the male; and, therefore, is likened to a burning flashing burnashed brass. And yet when it is useful to the man it is called dull.

The metaphors in the Sunshine Cat by Kamala are discriminating. It is possible to identify three metaphors that she has used in The Sunshine Cat. The initial metaphor present in the poem is - she was a cold woman (L.21). A sexually contrasting comparison occurs among the ladies and the fact is not sexual after all among men. The poetess has possibly applied such metaphor to a very old lady because such an old lady is not interested in sex anymore. However, the same metaphor is likely to be used to refer to all such women who lack a desire of sex. Thus, Das here in this metaphor has portrayed the sexuality of a woman through the heat. Using the same metaphor in references to men will not be sexual. To give an example, the metaphor will not be sexual at that point when one changes a cold woman with a cold man. The second metaphor that is, She was a half-dead woman (L.22) also tells about an old lady who has no sexual sensation. Half-dead is not gradable since there exist no gradable woman who can be referred to as half-dead. Contrary enough, woman is either dead or she is alive. However, this half-dead is what the poetess has termed as a metaphor. In her use of the phrase half-dead, the poetess has tried to show sexuality of the woman in the context of heat. The women who do not want to do sex are probably habitually being referred to by her as half dead. Hence, the metaphor above is used sexually when expressed about women.

The description that she was now useless (L.22) is poetic in nature as it is applied as a metaphor since it is in this scenario that the woman is being evaluated as an object that is useless. A new object is taken as very useful and effective. However, once the same object ages, then it is regarded as no longer being useful anymore; and therefore, discarded somewhere in the rubbish. In a similar manner, Das has perhaps employed such verse of an old woman who in her youth days was hot and sexually desirable but as she became old now she is useless due to hear or lack of interest in sex. The three mentioned metaphors are all derogatory and they expose the female gender as being inferior because they are mostly seen in sexual form. Quite to the contrary, Das has employed a single simile of the male one in the case of the The

In her comparisons of the new sprouted hair of the chest of the male with that of greatwinged moths she uses the term Sunshine Cat. It does not convey any negative meaning though.



In summer in Calcutta, the author does the comparison of the bubbles in the glass with the nervous smile of the bride: Wee bubbles ring my glass, like a bride's nervous smile (Blackswan, 2004, p.24). By comparing the smile of the bride to the bubbles, one presents the attractiveness and looks of the bride and, at the same time, the look of the bubbles in a glass of sun heat. Glass of April sun is seen a symbol of the poetess enjoying the heat of the month of April in Calcutta. Vice versa, concerning the comparison that was discussed above, we can say that female characters are typically drawn in terms of beauty and lust. The beauty and attraction of the bride are demonstrated by her smile. The males are outlined through their attributes and strengths as opposed to the females.

In addition, one may also find a sexism in the metaphors whereby the woman and the man are alluded in the poem *The Maggot*. Das has made use of two metaphors in the said poetic composition: one is to speak about the woman and the other about man. The metaphorical use of the term body of women is a corpse and the man is being equated to a maggot biting the corpse (Piciuccio, 2001, p. 62). The teleological meaning of the metaphor which has been used to refer to *Ridha* which is a woman is sexist; therefore it is derogatory to the gender of women. When the husband was unable to kiss *Ridha* on her body then her body was alluded to with reference to corpse and this kind of body does not experience the bite and nip of maggot. In this regard, the works by Mithun Rozario (2019) elucidate how the poet brings out the idea poetically on how there is no love in that the speaker feels that she is the dead body or the carcass and the husband is the maggots that are eating up the dead carcass. Moreover, this metaphor is sexist to the extent that it makes the woman become sexualised in order to be eaten like a flesh bitten. The metaphor, which is used to explain a man, is even demeaning.

The man in the act of kissing his wife's body is called a maggot which is an insect that is nipping and its feeding at the corpse.

So dead he questioned what is wrong

Still you do not complain about my kisses, do you, love...

Not everything, as one would think, what is.

do the maggots nip? In the view of (Piciuccio, 2001, p. 42)

In the Stone Age, we have the metaphor of a man and a woman also (Blackswan, 2004, p.51).

The husband is pathetically called the old colonist of the head (L.01). He is discussed as the ancient settler, as he is a man, who establishes things to his wife. Here, the poetess has brought out the clichéd idea that men are imposing boundaries and things on women. Besides this, the poetess has developed a metaphor that can be defined as a spider, old fat (L.2) which indicates the man is evil because of his character. It also creates the negative impression that men are bad predators since they are dragging the woman in the net of their adoration. Power and strength of man which was a predator is also a symbolic meaning of the term spider. The man is so powerful to the point of taking the woman to his clutches with so much ease. Also the choice of the word gives an indication that men are smart enough to dictate over the women. The two metaphors used in the poem to address the husband are not only being discriminatory on the male but also they are the good examples of sexism; hence, they are sexist. In her turn, the woman is also called the bird of stone, granite dove (L.3). The words which are employed here as metaphors imply the temptation and control of the woman.



The woman in the Old Playhouse is also metaphorically defined since there are plans of making the lady tame a swallow (Blackswan, 2004, p.1). The woman is symbolically equated with a little swallow of a bird who is tamed and likes and is attracted to a man. The switch points to the passivity, the lack of significance and the inferiority of the wife.

Kamala Das has not only used demeaning images of females but she has resorted to negative images of male beings as well. Metaphors used to describe the character of a male of the poem The Freak are very harsh. Kamala Das has metaphorically given his mouth a description of being a dark cave and his teeth as an uneven stalactite design

He is talking of transforming sun-stained
His mouth- cheek to me a dark,
Cavern, ...

Ripped teeth are glittering (Blackswan, 2004, p.11).

Besides the above mentioned metaphors, she has used one metaphor concerning female in the freak. Das has made use of the metaphor of a cistern that is devoid of the heart of a female. The feminine metaphor is disparaging, in the sense that the heart of the female is a tank empty which needs to be filled by the male with the love.

4.4 Cataloging of Men and Women

The suggestion of cataloging indicates that much mass of words can be used in the formation of female characters.

These words are those words that are provided by language. The only words that can be used to describe the hair of the females are like brunette, blonde, auburn, ash blonde. Quite the contrary, the conditions, under which the males are created, are limited and fewer.

There she has used variety of words in describing the female beauty, sex symbol and sexuality in her poem called The looking glass. The female has been described through the words which have been softer, younger and lovelier (5-6). Such words are used to speak about the females as their bodies are considered to be beautiful. Such types of words are not recognized in males as is the case with the females.

When it is old age in a man, then he becomes what is narrated as an old man as there is nothing to serve as an alternative to be used to describe this state on him instead of the term old. When however the woman comes to the old age then the variety of words is used so as to display her old piece. As the case in point above shows, the old woman is called drab and destitute (L.24) in looking glass. In the same way, in poem The Sunshine Cat, the three words have been used on the phrase cold, of no use and half-dead to mean an old woman. These terms are derogatory as they convey a bad message that a woman is useless when she has grown old. Such type of words are not used in male characters. Thus language provides huge categories of words that can be applied in the description of the female in comparison to the male.

Further, the language avails huge numbers of words to endear to the females. Not only are the women reduced to the same status as the adorable animals that are tied into the leash and muzzled but they are also placed in drinking condition that can be swallowed. Such words like my bird, my chick, cheesecake, sugar and honey among others are the words that are used and complained to the females by the men (Mills: 2005).



p.92). Kamala Das has also used the word female as a bird of stone and granite dove (L. 3) in a poem titled *The Stone Age* to portray her passiveness as well as her importance, which is not that significant in the male dominated world. Because dove is associated with peace, passiveness and even innocence, the female form used by Kamala Das is innocent and peaceful therefore, equal to the dove in the said characteristics. Words like; bird or dove are not very often being used by the male characters. In the same way in the first line of *The Old Playhouse* is a reference to the woman as a swallow: you would tame a swallow (L.1). The male is seldom called swallow. Instead, the ladies are usually referred to using such term to show their inferiority, and smallness among the men.

The language also has numerous slang terms to the female populous to the extent that females will be afraid to utter it in the street. Some of such words are vagina, womb etc. They are not sexual as could be gathered by the background of such words. Take an example; vagina is a follow-up to the Latin sheath which refers to the location where one keeps a sword (Mills, 2005, p.82). It has been misused in a way, which gives a realization that the only aim it attempts to fulfill is to intrude sex with men. Even the pregnancy is narrated in a male way of wording in a slang manner. Like to impregnate somebody and to knock somebody in the family way (Mills, 2005, p.82). This use of slang words is not unique when it comes to Kamala Das only; she gives us one example in her poems; menstrual blood (*The Looking Glass*), pregnant (*The Testing of Sirens*), and womb (*An Introduction*) etc. Based on this context, it is quite clear that the language provides the female individuals with numerous amounts of words. Such terms do not exist in the case of male.

5 Results and Conclusion

The analysis by applying the Feminist Stylistics approach established by Sara Mills helped to draw a couple of interesting conclusions to the interpretation of the nine selected poems by Kamala Das. First of all, the poem of Das never fails to provide extremes of male and female characters in characterization. Women simply portray a sort of broken entities, divided between their destiny and the rest of the world but the male characters turn out as cold, indifferent or even have high powers. It is convenient to make such a binary stance to emphasize the psychological and emotional burden women have to bear in a patriarchal society.

Second, the fragmentation as the stylistic handicapping variant emerges as a powerful device of the Das poetic statement. Incompleteness in sentences, stuttering shift of tone, collapse of syntax are symptoms of non-viable identities of women who are at war as lovers, wives and confusing identities of being both. This is, on the one hand, linguistic balkanization that describes not only internal chaos but opposition to rigid patriarchal standards, as well as a protest against the model of a coherent and submissive female discourse.

Thirdly, it is interesting and also threatening that Das uses sexist metaphors. Metaphors may take the form of internalized patriarchal phenomena e.g. presenting women as consumable and sacrificial objects, such metaphors may be constructed through internalized patriarchal representations in the form of violence and exploitation, these metaphors lodge, these patriarchal discourses are disrupted. That way, Das metaphors may be regarded as the seats of preserving patriarchal regime and feminism resistance to it.

Lastly, one can speak of cataloguing as one of the key stylistic devices employed by Kamala Das since the latter sums up some of the features and experiences that can be said to be exclusive to



men and women. The approach discloses the deep-rooted gender stereotypes and the cultural expectations and further it offers the critique of the tendencies of reducing the identity of women to the socially constructed role. The catalogue aids in taking women experience to a climax with a voice raised to express the feeling of confinement and alienation. When compiled, these endings show the manner in which Kamala Das applies the exertions of style to spread a subliminal comprehension on gender circumstances and encapsulates them into feminist uprising by forestalling a confessional statement.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, it has been shown how, a reading of the poetry of Kamala Das in the light of Feminist Stylistics put forward by Sara Mills suggests the presence of a multi-stranded interaction between language, gender and power. Fictionalization, atomization, metaphors of sexism, listing are another four poetic devices of characterization by Das due to which not only this poetic discourse outlines the chains that women are put into but also it de-fangs the patriarchal norms also present in language. The stylistic mark of her expression is that she has given a broken reality about the sense of women identity making her poetry a confession as well as a criticism.

Being related to a feminist stylistic treatment, the paper extends the thematic construction notion to a dynamic creation of gendered associations in the structure of language. Our fresh ideas on Feminist stylistics lay focus on the practicality of feminist stylistics to the process of the literary study meaning, in the regard of giving a light to this implication of texts in the activities of perpetuating the gender ideologies or undercutting them.

Moreover it also addresses a significant niche in the academic world since it has engaged the feminist stylistic approach in a consistent manner to the poetry of Kamala Das and presents new concepts in the realm of female criticism, the stylistics practice, and Indian literature of South Asia. Kamala Das finally turns out to be not just a confessional poet but also a linguistic genius, the way she employs the weapons of style in a desperate attempt of reclaiming her female subjectivity and defying the patriarchal discourse confessionally.

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