

The Woman on Women's Woes: A Study of Kamala Das's "An Introduction"

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Abstract

Kamala Das, a renowned icon in Indian literature, is mainly known for her uncompromising voice in her writings. She writes in a distinctly Indian Persona. Das is labelled as a rebel woman who observes the silences of Indian women and condemns the patriarchal hegemony through her fiery lines. Her poetry has flung open its doors to let in topics that women poets had always kept out. Feminine sensibilities are expressed in her writings. Her poetry records her personal experiences, chiefly in the sphere of marriage and sex. She tries to re-evaluate society by questioning the despicable positions that have been granted to women. "An Introduction", published in the collection of "Summer in Calcutta" (1965), is a detailed account of Kamala Das's life and her conflicts with her own self and the society. The poem brings out all the sufferings that paralyse a woman and also her yearning for feminine identity in a male-dominated world. It is a revolt against the dehumanized treatment of women by the superior sex. She speaks up openly about the pains of becoming a woman. The paper predominantly confines itself to a study into the miserable lives of every woman in the light of the confessional poem "An Introduction". It attempts to evaluate the poem critically and explain how the woman in the poem becomes the "I" and voices universal womanhood in an individualistic tone.

Keywords: Domination; identity; patriarchy; society; woman; woes

Introduction

Kamala Das, popularly known for her fiery voice in her poems, is one of the major poets in contemporary Indian English literature. Unlike other poets, her poetry is free from 19th century romanticized love and filled with a clear note and tone of a rebel woman - the new woman. She has chosen topics that have continuously been kept decorously out. Her loud expressions of female sexuality and guiltless frankness in writing make her a rebel icon among the Indian poets. Her poems become the language of a woman who observes the marginalized Indian women's silences and denounces the patriarchal hegemony. She is an exemplary new woman trying to voice universal womanhood by sharing her experiences with all other women. In her poems, she openly talks about her subjugated position in society and shares her tales of woe. Das states, "All the pain unexpressed and the sad tales left untold made me write recklessly and in protest" (Kaura, 1995, p. 165). She openly articulates her pent-up feelings and brings before the male-dominated society all the "sad tales" that were "left untold" in a formidable way-"formidable to those who try

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their best to suppress the fire of anger and protest of the women for so long a time – the time from the Vedic Ages up to the post-modern one" (Paul, 2018, p. 81). She voices all the sentiments that the society has suppressed from ancient times. She is reckless and spontaneous in her writings. She views herself with a persistent lens and makes herself the subject of her writing. It can very well be said that her poems are her real biographies. Besides being autobiographical, her poetry is confessional, and because of this confessional style, her poems led to comparisons with Sylvia Plath, Marguerite Duras and Anne Sexton. Some of her notable works in English include the novel *Summer in Calcutta* (1965), *Alphabet of Lust* (1977), a collection of short stories called *Padmavati the Harlot and Other Stories* (1992), six books of poetry, *Summe*, *The Descendants* (1967), *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems* (1973), *The Anamalai Poems* (1985), *Only the Soul Knows How to Sing* (1996), *Ya Allah*, *Closure* (2010) and her autobiography, *My Story* (1976). She is the unapologetic poet who never fails to amaze her readers with raw depictions of her deepest desires.

"An Introduction" is included in her first collection of poems, *Summer in Calcutta* (1965). It is this particular collection that has established Das as a "confessional poet". Vrinda Nabar (1994) observes: the volume contains "a high degree of intensity, along with an almost compulsive candour, a disregard for "nice" feminine concealments, and an aggressively independent assessment of the man-woman relationship" (p. 20). The book records her spontaneous and intimate responses. The poet candidly exhibits her life in the poems. She speaks with a "distinctive voice" and displays love in various moods; gives an "aggressively independent" assessment of the man-woman relationship, records the most "intimate responses" with enormous "spontaneity" (Nabar, 1994, p. 20). She portrays herself as the new woman who audaciously questions the dictates of patriarchy. "An Introduction" is an appropriate introduction to Das's poetic identity. The poem marks her impassioned responses against women's oppression in the Indian context and unveils the long-suppressed agonies in women. It expresses some life incidents, her rejection of patriarchal norms and dictates and her rebellion against gender roles. However, the revolt ends with the contention of her identity; she recognises herself with 'I'. With courage and determination, Das presents "the men-women relationship in a new light of love and sexuality, something which can also be found in Sujata Bhatt and Taslima Nasreen" (Paul, 2018, pp. 80-81). Her writings bear some thematic resemblance to the compositions of Sujata Bhatt and Taslima Nasreen as both of these poets are popularly known for their writings on women's oppression. In Indian society, where "speaking of sex or passion is considered as dirty or taboo, Kamala Das uses the very things as the medium of protest in her poems" (Tandan & Dwivedi, 2018, p. 460). She opens up new paths for the readers to look forward to human

relationships with a new outlook, something rarely attempted by any woman poet. The poem is concerned with the question of 'woman identity' and the woes of women in a patriarchal society. Das's quest for identity "is directly the progeny of an old social set up, oriented towards the annihilation of the feminine personality" (Vijayavani, 2018, p. 110). From ancient times the male-centric world tried to "annihilate" the feminine personality (Vijayavani, 2018, p. 110). The identities of women have been getting reduced in a male-dominated society. Kamala Das's quest for identity in this poem is actually the "progeny" of such an ancient social set-up. By using the themes of love, sex, and body, Das represents her feminine stance, protesting against the dictums of patriarchy. She speaks of the feminist problems, the dangers inherent in the discovery of the female self. "An Introduction" explicitly expresses her longing for belongingness. She comes into conflict with the 'men's world' that holds "women captive within a fake bubble of belongingness" (U. Das, 2018, p. 105). She revolts against the dictates of the patriarchal society that asks her to 'fit in' and remain pleased with the role of the 'Other'. However, Simone de Beauvoir first presented the idea of "Woman as Other" in her remarkable creation *The Second Sex* (Beauvoir, 1956, p. 16). She describes how a woman "is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other" (Beauvoir, 1956, p.16). The category of woman is defined by everything man is not—she is the inessential, the object, the Other. Females have always been 'othered' and made to suffer as marginalised entities, but women poets have rarely attempted to open up to their readers about the struggles. Kamala Das, being the poet of the female 'Other', addresses all the nerve-racking issues in a challenging manner. She had invited endless controversies and criticisms because of her candor, but that did not stop her. Das vividly records the marital journey of 'every woman' of a third world country through the confessional poem "An Introduction." The poem, like all her poems, strongly expresses feminine sensibility and is equipped with female experience of emotional shock of an unhappy marriage. She compares and contrasts the roles of men and women in society in the poem and explains how her life, the rules she's forced to obey, infringe on her freedom. The paper aims at exploring the forlorn condition of women and their subjugated position in the society as reflected in the poem "An Introduction". It also attempts to evaluate the woman voice in the poem by critically examining it and analyze the tone of a rebel woman who voices universal womanhood.

"An Introduction": A Critical Revision

The poem "An Introduction" begins with the poet stating that she does not have a firm grasp of politics but remembers the politicians' names. Their names have become a part of her. It begins with the assertion: "I don't know politics, but I

know the names/ Of those in power" (Sur ayya, 1965, p. 62) (lines 1-2). By challenging the readers that "she can repeat these as easily as days of the week, or the names of months, she echoes that these politicians were caught in a repetitive cycle of time, irrespective of any individuality" (Jose, 2014, p. 120). Time defines these personalities; they do not define time. She opens the poem by presenting herself with 'weaknesses', which clearly shows the ignored marginalized female position in the society. With these opening lines, the scene is set. It clarifies the traditional way of positioning women in the male chauvinist society. Politics is men's domain, and women have no share of it. Subsequently, she moves on to describe her roots, her own being. She interestingly defines herself in the poem: "I am Indian, very brown, born in Malabar," (Sur ayya, 1965, p. 62) (line 4-5). The "I" suggests her strong sense of possession. She does not affiliate her name with her father or family; instead, she identifies herself as an 'Indian'. Here she projects "Indian nation as a separate and dominant nation" (Ayaz & Anjum, 2018, p. 179). It shows her attitude towards freedom: Podder (2018) speaks in this regard: "A true Post-colonialist, Das is rebellious against the western concept of 'orient' or otherness. She believes in the individual identity of every human being. So significantly instead of introducing herself with reference of her family or relatives she reveals her identity as an Indian" (p. 902). Hers is an independent soul with an ingrained sense of liberty. She takes pride in being "very brown", and she does not 'belong' to Malabar; instead, she is "born" in Malabar (Sur ayya, 1965, p. 62). Her outrageously bold spirit finds expressions in the carefully chosen words, the way she introduces her own self. She "speaks in three languages, writes in two and dreams in one" (Sur ayya, 1965, p. 62). She attempts to prove that she is no less than any man in the world. Most of her writings are in English and Malayalam, and she dreams in the language of poets and artists. Her mind is identical to the minds of 'all' other poets. It resembles all other creative minds and shares the same language, which she terms as 'language of dreams'. Her mind enjoys complete liberty as Woolf (1929) says, that "There is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind" (p. 208). As a daunting Indian woman writer who writes in two languages (English and Malayalam), her credentials are an illustrious fact. The poet Rumens (1993) finds it interesting that this bilingual writer,

[u]ses both Malayalam and English for her fiction, but English only for her poetry, a factor which rejects that English is her mother-tongue. The voice operates between idiolect and dialect. It is outside standard norms of poetic diction, yet inward enough with the language to conjure a sense of these more familiar dialects, sometimes assimilated, sometimes hovering at the edge. (p. 35)

She uses English exclusively for her poetry, whereas Malayalam and English for her fiction. Her voice is outside the "standard norms of poetic diction", but she owns it beautifully (Rumens, 1993, p. 35). She adds that her language is not pure English but half Indian. It may sound funny, but this newly emerged language gives the same feelings as a living thing. Homi K. Bhaba uses the term 'Hybrid' for this mixed language. He supports this "hybrid as a tool for the voice of oppressed" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 120). The voice of the oppressed finds genuineness in this 'Hybrid' language. However, Das is judged for her use of language and again for writing in English. She boldly resents agreeing with Bhabha's views regarding the significance of the use of 'Hybrid' language:

Why not leave
Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,
Every one of you? Why not let me speak in
Any language I like? The language I speak,
Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses
All mine, mine alone.
It is half English, half Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest,
It is as human as I am human, don't
You see? (Surayya, 1965, p. 62) (lines 8-16)

Language is not confined to a specific locality or person; it belongs to its users in every possible way. She rejects to "conform to cultural phallogocentric language and norms" (U. Das, 2018, p. 108). Language is not only men's territory. This was the view which Salman Rushdie saw as a linguistic revolution later on, especially in his concept of "chutnification" (Rushdie, 1980, p. 456). Das again reflects the main theme of Girish Karnad's Broken Images- the language that she speaks is hers, it is "honest", it is the language of her expression as it voices her joys, sorrows, and hopes she has embraced it with all the defects and distortions. She decides to make her individual choice; the new woman struggles to assert her individuality by choosing her own language. The sense of 'self' is observed in an 'other' that is not inferior in any sense to the males of the society. She refuses this restriction on her freedom of expression and her identity. She belongs to those "feminists who made a strong appearance and broke free from the rhetorical and romantic convention of writing poetry to establish her individuality as well as to exercise her freedom" (Rayhan, Md & Jannat, 2018, p. 62). She breaks a lot of boundaries to claim such kind of linguistic rights, which mark her revolutionary spirit.

In the second stage, the narrator discloses her experience that is entirely feminine. She was innocent and tender when the society planned her marriage; she knew that she grew up in others opinions only, but emotionally, she was in the same immature phase. She states,

I was child, and later they
Told me I grew for I became tall, my limbs
Swelled and one or two places sprouted hair. (Sur ayya, 1965, p. 62) (lines 24-26).

"They" reinforces Kamala Das's agitation with the commanding voices of patriarchy. "They" tell her that "it is time to grow up and conduct herself in a manner befitting of a woman" (Ayaz & Anjum, 2018, p. 108). "They" are the ones who impose stereotyped roles on women. She shows her resentment against them, who decide women's roles and defines them. Married at the early age of sixteen, she gets confined in a single room. She feels humiliated because of her early changes in puberty. The loveless marriage makes her feminine existence even more aching and cursed. She feels a sense of loss and suffocation. It crushes her soul and her essence as a woman. When she asks for love "not knowing what else to ask for", a male body is forced upon her: she says in the poem,

"he drew a youth of sixteen into the
Bedroom and closed the door, He did not beat me
But my sad woman-body felt so beaten." (Surayya, 1965, p. 62) (lines 28-30).

As she seeks fulfilment of her love and passion, a man is forced upon her to traumatize her. Haider (2010) puts it beautifully, "In place of love, she encounters lust which cannot satisfy her soul's longing (p. 283). No one cares to listen to her "soul's longing". She is being 'commodified' and denied respect. But her spirit can not accept it; she gets shattered; as Singh (2015) points out, "Kamala Das staunchly etches the emotional picture of women and succinctly reiterates that she should not be treated as a commodity or a subaltern" (p. 3). She demands respect as she, like any other human being, deserves respect. She is misinterpreted. They confuse her want of love and attention for insatiable sexual craving. Nevertheless, they enter each other's lives and make it their temporary home where love is absent. The marriage does not "provide her any solace or comfort" (Akhter, 2013, p. 1628). She finds herself dragged into an uncomfortable relationship in the name of 'marriage'. Her desire for emotional intimacy elicits her behaviour and responses, and "thus is closely tied to her sense of personal identity" (James, 2010, p. 60). She does not hesitate to admit that her marriage has been an utter failure. In her poem "The Stone Age", Das frankly speaks about the futility of marital relationships where the husband takes the wife's identity. She satirically calls her husband "Old fat spider, weaving webs of bewilderment" that robbed her of individuality and freedom and turned her into a lifeless showpiece of "a bird of stone, a granite dove" in his house (K Das, 2004, p. 51). But the 'dove' continues to fight for establishing her identity and startles the world with radical modification of the 'weaker sex'. Like all other

Indian women, the new woman receives sexual humiliation and exploitation and remains captive. She speaks about women being imprisoned in the prison named 'Marriage' and wants to show the idea of "double imprisonment of women" (Spivak, 1988, p. 26). They get a new master in the shape of the husband in addition to the "they" who were already performing the roles of masters in the lives of the 'slaves' or more generously termed as 'women'. Her father was also a tormenting agent of the patriarchy. She describes him as an 'autocrat'. Thus, her marriage only gave her a feeling of 'double imprisonment'. Simone de Beauvoir's comment in *The Second Sex* echoes what happened to Kamala Das:

There is unanimous agreement that getting a husband – or in some cases a "protector"

– will free herself from the paternal home, from her mother's hold, she will open up her future, not by active conquest but by delivering herself up, passive and docile into the hands of a new master (p. 352).

Das delivers herself into the "hands of a new master" (Beauvoir, 1956, p. 352). She presents the man-woman relationship as akin to the postcolonial master-slave conflict. In the words of (Tandan & Dwivedi, 2018), "Through the image of a brilliant metaphor she points out the relationship between husband and wife through the historical phenomenon of colonialism with its practices and effects" (p. 461). The poem brings the master-slave relationship into light. The husbands enjoy their roles as masters and take the responsibility of taming their wives. The same idea is reflected in her autobiography, *My Story*, where she describes her own pitiful lot:

I settled down to housekeeping and sewed the button on and darned our old garments, all through the hot afternoons. In the evening, I brought for my husband his tea and plate of snags. I kept myself busy with dreary housework while my spirit protested and cried 'get out of this trap, escape' (Kamala Das, 1978, p. 79).

In the lines, she consciously demonstrates her routine-bound monotonous life. She was wearied of doing the household chores and wanted to escape the trap of the patriarchal agencies. She objects to accept this life of slavery. In "An Introduction", she speaks of women shrinking "pitifully" under the patriarchal domination; they yearn for love and freedom. But all their cries go unheard. The painful experiences in her marriage make the poet tired of her body and womanliness. As a means of protest, she puts on a shirt, her brother's trousers and cuts her hair short, ignoring her womanliness against those who asked her to become a woman- "Dress in sarees, be girl/ Be wife, they said. Be embroider, be cook, / Be a quarreler with servants..."

(Surayya, 1965, p. 62) (lines 34-36). She wants to remake her identity. Society asks her to conform to womanly roles, but Das does not want the society to control her. The speaker expresses her contempt at these "restrictions that limit her sense of womanliness by trying to ignore them" (Spivak, 1988, p. 27). She is an individual woman trying to voice her thoughts in her individual language. She asserts "from female point of view and for the female centred approach to life" (Sarma, 2016, p. 660) and displays feminist ethos in the poem. Through the poem, she voices universal womanhood and shares her experiences with all other women.

Das wants to expand her presence in the world. She is meant to be herself. In her words, "Be Amy, or be Kamala. Or, better/ Still, be Madhavikutty. It is time to/ Choose a name, a role (Sur ayya, 1965, p. 62) (lines 38-40). She ponders over her own identity as she can now be "Kamala", "Amy" or better still "Madhavikutty". The desire to be her own self is a means of liberation from men's malicious clutches and sterile relationships. Her injured feminine self strongly wishes to explore identity and freedom- be it by being Amy, Kamala or Madhavikutty. She indulges in self-awareness, self-exploration and self-introspection in order to define herself. In the following few lines, the poet observes the monopoly of the patriarchal society.

Don't play at schizophrenia or be a
Nympho. Don't cry embarrassingly loud when
Jilted in love (Sur ayya, 1965, p. 62) (lines 42-44).

She is criticized for being a schizophrenic or a "Nympho". By acting as a male, she seems to them someone who has lost connection with reality. In her poetry, moral reticence and social restraints compel feminist voices to feel oppressively disdained, which ultimately forces her to seek rebellious pursuits. The categorizers remind her not to cry "embarrassingly loud" (Sur ayya, 1965, p. 62) (line 43). She is instructed not to cry for her freedom or her choice. But she resists this masterly attitude. She wants to design her life in her way and make a room of her own. However, she does not speak for herself, but she is generalizing herself for the sake of all women, as pointed out by Juli James (James, 2010):

On the whole, Das's love poetry embodies purely personal grievances, but here the woman-persona speaks as 'every woman'. In doing so, she turns personal into public, by generalizing; she invites other women to embrace her experiences of shame, guilt, hurt and bless as their own, in the same way that she offers to embrace theirs. (p. 66).

She becomes every woman and reveals all the uninhibited expressions of the raw experiences that Indian women have in their lives. She speaks as 'every

woman' and turns her personal life into public life. Kamala Das tries to actuate the concept of womanhood by taking up her pen against the traditionally accepted notions regarding the 'Other'. She speaks for the liberation of the 'other sex' by articulating the pangs and sufferings of the tortured ones. Her sincere confessions are unquestionably courageous in the Indian context.

In between distress, she met a man whom she loved. She does not call him by any definite name; for her, the man is 'every man'. In her opinion, he is like 'every man', who requires a woman to satisfy his carnal desire, just as every woman looks for a man to meet her soul's craving for love. On being asked, "Who are you," he answers, "it is I" (Sur ayya, 1965, p. 62) (lines 49-50). He defines himself by the "I", the supreme male ego. And this 'I' can conquer her anytime; he can attack her freedom with the "sword in the sheath" (Sur ayya, 1965, p. 62) (line 53). The power politics of the patriarchal society is very strikingly presented here. She exists solely for the man as a tool to serve his male ego and his sense of possession. The "I" admits that he 'drinks at twelve', 'makes love' and 'laughs' but after all these, he feels ashamed at the thought of losing his willpower in front of a woman. Towards the end, a reversal of role occurs as the poet declares:

I am sinner,
I am saint. I am the beloved and the
Betrayed. I have no joys that are not yours, no
Aches which are not yours. I too call myself I. (Surayya, 1965, p. 62) (lines 57-60).

She takes her confession up to the point where she takes every responsibility for her actions. She breaks the typical image of an 'ideal woman' as an uncomplaining, all-tolerant, non-demanding, conformist being. The lines record her "longing for autonomy and woman identity" (Sarma, 2016, p.661). She asserts her identity in a society that deliberately wants to eradicate her identity. She wants to enjoy the liberty that this "I" enjoys (Sur ayya, 1965, p. 62). Das "vociferously protests to put an end to institutionalized womanhood that coerces women to become passive, pliant and docile" (Haider, 2010, p. 295). She decides to come alive by pushing aside the patriarchal norms. She tries to come to terms with her own independence and identity as both "saint" and "sinner" (Sur ayya, 1965, p. 62). She proclaims her joys and pains are no different than those of men. Like men, she is also 'sinner' and 'saint', 'beloved' and 'betrayed'. Hence, she has all the right to own the title 'I'. So she becomes the 'I'. The concluding lines of the poem record the poet's longing for autonomy and a woman identity. The poem, which is an introduction to Kamala Das's self, turns out to be an introduction to every woman's self. It is a universal voice of the creative writer.

Being the daughter of a great poet and the representative of Kerala's famous matrilineal family, Das could not let her unruly spirit ignore the patriarchal domination suffered by women through the ages. She unveils the long-suppressed agonies and anxieties in women through the act of writing. "An Introduction" effectively demonstrates her innermost anxieties. She raises her voice against the exploitation of women and opposes the conventions of the society, which are meant to exploit womankind. Iyengar (1962) states: "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". She impetuously rebels against women's insensible and inhuman treatment in an "insensitive largely man-made world". Men's world had always been insensitive to women's pangs. Das examines the silences of women in a male-dominated society. The conspiratorial silencing of woman-centred issues, "especially those revolving around sexuality, desire, intimacy, relationship and marriage and those forms of engendered violence that inform a woman's existence today have been tackled effectively for the first time by Kamala Das" (Haider, 2010, p. 280). She is "a million, million silences/ strung like crystal beads/ Onto someone else's song" (Narasimhaiah, 1990, p. 49). She lends her powerful voice to the silenced women. In her poems she finds the cure to her disturbed, and restless mind as Saha (2016) puts it, for her "poetry is a medium of intimate revelation leading towards personal salvation, redemption. It is a therapeutic process, a way of coming to terms with the exceptional female energy that lies in their inner self" (p. 36). Her writings work as a therapy for her mental health. In writing, she finds the best medium for the communication of her inner turbulence and she unburdens her mind.

Conclusion

"An Introduction" poignantly displays how a patriarchy-dominated society has always tortured women. It effectively demonstrates the poet's life and her innermost anxieties regarding identity, choice and judgement. It presents the "truthful picture of her life, her emotions of love and sex, her revolutionary attitude against the callous and cruel patriarchy and her bold pleading for feminism" (Sarma, 2016, p. 660). She exposes the feminist concern. In the poem, "the torturous psyche of this rebellious poet is in search of love and justification of the meaning of marriage, with a capacity to universalize her feelings of protest and anger in such a way as to give the feminist critical mode a new introduction" (Paul, 2018, p. 81). Kamala Das vividly portrays her troubled marital life in the poem and her struggles as a 'woman'. The 'woman' struggles to find the meaning of marriage. She sarcastically reveals that one of the basic foundations of the man-woman relationship is the essential fire of sexuality. There is no place for love. She defines marriage as a process in which the emotions and feelings of the women are crushed down, and they are made to feel "beaten". She complains that nobody seems to bother about

their wishes, aspirations, frustrations. They are trapped in the roles of "embroider, cook or quareller". The wives are meant to be confined in the four walls and satisfy the male ego. Their masters dwarf them, as she states in "The Old Playhouse" (2004), that they "cower" beneath their monstrous ego and become "a dwarf" (p. 1). They lose their willpower and are driven by the male inflated ego. Das, however, refuses to "fit in" the man-made roles; she is reluctant to surrender her wish and will. Her spirit tries to escape. However, she does escape in her writings. In "An Introduction", Kamala Das, adopting a 'deliberate disguise' as Madhavikutty, voices the wretched condition of Indian women, choosing English as her mode of expression. She has been terribly criticized for her use of language but she rebels; she says that she owns the language, and it is useful to her "as cawing is to crows" (Sur ayya, 1965, p. 62) (lines 17-18). She further adds that her language is distinctive and honest. She proudly owns it with all the "queerness" (Sur ayya, 1965, p. 62) (line 12). As she proceeds through the poem, the thought of choosing a 'role' makes her delighted.

Being Madhavikutty, she talks about falling in love, and this is where the poem becomes truly confessional. She rejects the world of husbands to have an 'introduction' into the peaceful world of love. But she miserably fails in her attempt to enter the world of love. The 'every man' attacks her soul with the "sword", and the 'every woman' feels persecuted. She, like all other women, shatters under the pressure of expectations. Her "uncanny honesty extends to her exploration of womanhood and love" (Ansari, 2012, p. 682). She becomes the "sinner" and the "saint", the "beloved", and the "betrayed". In the end, she rejoices as she asserts her right to call herself "I" - "I too call myself I" (Sur ayya, 1965, p. 62) (line 60). She becomes the "I". With this transformation, the poem becomes a universal voice of the creative female writer. Therefore, this poem is both personal and universal in tone. It talks about Kamala Das, the individual and Madhavikutty, the creative voice. The female voice in the poem unveils women's woes through her raging words. She speaks in an "aggressively individualistic" tone voicing universal womanhood, and she makes it a celebration of the beauty and courage of being a woman. Das emancipates herself as well as the whole female entity from the imposed stereotypical status of 'other' in "An Introduction". She is 'every woman who seeks love'; she is 'the beloved and the betrayed', expressing her 'endless female hungers', 'the mutual whisper at the core of womanhood' (Naik, 1982, p. 209). The "I" in the poem becomes the voice of every woman. She becomes the woman who always stands and speaks for women; she asserts her identity as the 'new woman' voicing women's woes.

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