

# EVALUATION ON WOMEN CHARACTERS TREATMENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KAMALA DAS AND ADRIENNE RICH

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#### Abstract:

Adrienne Rich and Kamala Das' poetry is centered on women, families, and feminism. Women are frequently linked to nature because they share its fundamental creative process, which is in charge of development and constancy. She guarantees that life will continue by carrying a child inside her womb. However, because her more powerful and dominant counterpart could not recognize that creation is a woman's domain, this lady stays still, denied growth and progress. He has always been insecure, so he established a set of rules that restrict women and make them reliant on him. She becomes a dancing doll who, without even realizing it, dances to win her man over. But as she comes to this insight, the patriarchal system is questioned, and feminism is born. Feminism is the name given to the movement that defends women's rights and works to eliminate laws that discriminate against them. It has to do with the idea that women ought to enjoy the same political, social, and economic rights as men. In this article, evaluation on comparison of women characters treatment with special reference to Kamala Das and Adrienne Rich has been discussed.

Keywords: Women Characters, Kamala Das, Adrienne Rich



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## **INTRODUCTION:**

The goal of feminism is to bring women into line with men in terms of equality. However, the historical and political fight for equal rights highlights the worth of women for who they are. So, the basic foundation of the argument is the recognition that women are already equally valued by men. However, this ideal must be situated as diversity rather than equality in the context of women's lack of equal rights. In their own unique ways, women have equal human value. Feminism effectively and genuinely opposes the patriarchal system's systematic devaluation of women when it affirms the worth of the woman as a woman. Differences and equality are not mutually exclusive. However, when a discourse about female difference is presented in a vacuum, it bears the risk of replicating the very patriarchal stereotypes that the advocates of equality are fighting to dismantle.

#### WOMEN CHARACTERS TREATMENT:

Women writers played a significant role in raising awareness among ordinary women who have lost their will and desire due to patriarchal laws and regulations. Literature awards contributed to the feminist movement by raising women's awareness of their right to express themselves through their feminist writing. Numerous female writers have made significant contributions to this literary genre by expressing the fears and anxieties of the feminist psyche. Authors such as American Sylvia Plath, Virginia Woolf, France's Simon de Beauvoir, and England's Virginia Woolf opened the door for an unprecedented examination of the existential conflict that exists in the feminized psyche as a reaction to the patriarchal social structure. Their poetic personae have emerged as the main characters in women's collective consciousness. Their poets' poetic outbursts helped women understand their psyche and lift the veil of helplessness and dependence on men that was imposed upon them by a men-centered society. As time went on, this literacy movement spread to other parts of the world, and poets of new generations, like Adriane Rich in America and Kamala Das in India, took up the torch and assumed responsibility for enlightening the minds of women with feminine sensibilities. These individuals laid the groundwork for modern feminist literature.

The history of feminism in India dates back thousands of years. Feminist icons such as Gandhari, Draupadi, and Sita are outstanding examples of epic women. They spoke out against misbehavior



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and actions that undermined their sense of self-worth and femininity. Since India has historically been a male-dominated society since antiquity, Indian women have been buried behind numerous heavy, lax layers of prejudice, custom, ignorance, and reserve in both literature and daily life.

Man has traditionally been at the apex of Indian society since prehistoric times. Although they are respected on par with men, women have never had leadership or decision-making roles. They were never primary. In both literature and real life, Indian women were shrouded in a thick, lax covering of prejudice, custom, ignorance, and reluctance. Being inanimate objects that trailed their men by five steps, they needed to be kind, understanding, and excellent followers in general. It is thought that a woman cannot live by herself. They require constant observation. According to a religious text, a woman should submit to her father when she is a kid, her husband when she is a young lady, and her sons when her husband passes away. She should not be allowed to be independent because she is weak and unable to make her own decisions.

Even yet, a few legendary women, such as Gandhari from Mahabharat, who covered her eyes when she learned that she was getting married to the blind Dhritarashtra, planted the seeds of feminism. According to conventional wisdom, she blinded herself in order to show her husband how devoted she was to him and to deprive herself of the pleasures that were denied to him. However, in reality, it was a revolting act by a betrayed woman who was forced to marry a blind man after being denied the opportunity to select a suitable partner. She responded by swearing never to look at that man's face or at the world that had taken away her freedom to do as she pleased and forced that choice upon her.

Another Mahabhartian lady is well-known for her feminist outlook, that is to say. When Draupadi states, in front of all the monarchs, that she would not marry Karna, we first see the feminist perspective in her character. The man who was attempting to win her did not have this refusal because of his caste. However, she was referring to a woman's right to choose her partner. When being humiliated by Dusshasana in the Dhritarashtra court, she vowed to tie up her hair only when Kaurava's blood had stained it. For the following thirteen years, she didn't braid her hair. When Mahabhart was finished and she had her revenge, she chained them.



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Once more, Sita is a powerful feminist for her era. She is devoted to and deeply respects Rama as a husband. But she felt deceived and hurt when he left her behind while she was pregnant. When she finally met Rama sixteen years later, he asked her to demonstrate her chastity before he would accept her once more. She demonstrated, and as a result, she took her own life. Her dignity forbids her from accompanying him. Mother Earth, she asked. It is true that I have never considered a man except Rama in my heart. Mother Earth, please accept me into your fold. She takes Sita with her when the earth cracks apart in front of her, and she takes Rama with her. Sita still has a deep love for Rama, but her memories of him are all that remain. Because of some unfounded allegations about her virginity, he died the minute he left her. She took a very hard stand for herself by declining Rama's company.

Although these legendary women serve as inspiration, they are unable to speak for all women because their actions and responses are specific to them. However, there is no denying that the seeds of feminism were sown a long time ago, germinated in the nineteenth century, and completely blossomed in the twentieth century. The voice of one woman has become the voice of all women, and it has received recognition from people all over the world. Women's brains were awakened to the concerns of comparable influence, sexist bias, psychological, and even physical exploitation, thanks in large part to literature. These problems with women are widespread around the world, but in eastern countries, women are repressed or subjected to torture. Women writers have reached out to help with the following:

Adrienne Rich in America and Kamala Das in India are carrying on the tradition of educating women and working to liberate them from the oppressive power of patriarchy.

One of the main themes of feminist literature is freedom of expression. The poetry of Adrienne Rich and Kamala Das masterfully reflects unrestrained expression as a mirror to this world where men predominate. Kamala Das articulates her own and other women's struggle to live up to the conventional standard of a woman. In her poem "A Feminist's Lament," she writes:



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They said that the perfect woman was, but A masochist. trained since birth. To don the cowardly flannels She was trained to lie motionless next to her skin. In the presence of a guy, by making promises To provide for her, clothe her, and purchase The 1000-square-foot apartment with a loft To store the rubble of years gone by.

She goes on to say that because she falls short of these standards, she is not the ideal lady. She is unwilling to conform to the norms of a patriarchal culture. Rich expresses sympathy for a woman whose life ends while carrying out her husband's given tasks in the poem A Woman Mourned by Daughters. Rich sheds light on the meaningless existence that women lead. She writes:

You now breathe upon us. By making strong claims Of oneself: spoon, glasses Carpet seas and a forest If you were to water aged plants, An elderly guy in a nearby A place to be caressed and fed.

Feminism is the pursuit of one's own identity after having it stolen by a society that places a high value on men. In Rich's poetry, Double Monologue, she expresses their need for others to know their position:

Ever since I was no longer a child Donning a thousand guises I've been curious about one thing. Just because I recognize my name



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Where I am at any given time.

Kamala Das becomes furious over the name society has given her and declares that she has the right to live her life as she pleases, even though they refuse to let her because of that moniker. She expresses the desire of every woman to discover this universe in her poem "Spoiling the Name":

I've had a name for thirty years. Years selected by a different person For ease of use, however, when you state Don't give out your name; I think I... I must laugh, as I am aware of my existence. To be lived, with no name attached My corpuscle has a life of its own. Lived...

Women have defined ideal men in the same manner that men have defined ideal women. Adrienne Rich says in her poem "Likeness" that she is certain that her thoughts about men are true of all men.

A decent man Is it a traditional item? Difficult to locate.

Kamala Das likens her husband to an obese old spider that is hell-bent on ruining her life. She engages in a quarrel. She claims she must harm someone in order to save herself.

Devoted spouse, mental settler from ancient times, An elderly spider is spinning confusing webs. Show kindness. You make me into a granite bird and a bird of sand. Dove...



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Through their poetry, these feminist poets explored and questioned societal standards and the disparity in power between men and women, allowing their inner turmoil to come through. Using their personal voice and self-revelation in their writing is a way for them to establish themselves and carve out a space for themselves in the world. The poem The Demon Lovers Rich offers a more indepth interpretation. He is the other in this situation, and the man who is denying her animosity is exacerbating her own sense of division. The question at hand is whether or not she can make an internal or external accommodation with him.

Should I yield, it won't

Think like the bull and the girl.

All the flesh of Rubens and joyful moons,

But to be a boy who wrestles.

With the tongue, knees, hips, and nerves related to language.

She wants her partner to value her body and mind as a complete person. But he rejects her spirit and brains, claiming that a woman's body is all that is needed.

The lover is therefore a demon lover.

In the love poem, Kamala Das depicts the woman's persona as intolerable as "the burning mouth" of the sun, revealing the same harsh and conceited attitude of the male partner.

What does the flaming mouth speak of? Of sun, scorching in the current Sky reminds me of his... well, yes, Mouth, and his appendages such as pallid and Reaching for Carnivorous Plants For me, and the depressing lie Of my ceaseless want.



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Glancing at the sun, she was reminded of his lips and his limbs like pale, carnivorous plants beckoning me and the depressing delusion of my never-ending want.

According to these phrases, the male companion is going to devour her soul, much like a carnivorous plant. He just needs the body and is self-centered. He did not touch the soul. She continues,

#### As I stroll

The verandah was vacant.

My mind is racing with questions about him and the communication this skin is sending out. Something I dare not term our love just yet in his company.

Rich says in the poem "Planetarium"

I'm a tool. Shaped like a woman Attempting to interpret pulsations For the body's alleviation, into image.

Here, the poet takes aim at the way males use women in society to satisfy their lustful desires. She says that males use women as toys merely to appease them. When they are tired and in need of a change, they are almost like a relaxation tool. They approach women in an attempt to relax and have their wishes met, paying little attention to their expectations or sentiments.

When Ms. Das looks around her, she discovers a world ruled by men who are sex-obsessed. When she writes this, she is opposing male egotism.

You were happy with how my body responded. The customary shallow convulsions of its weather. You spilled drool on my lips. You exerted yourself to the fullest in every corner. You put my poor passion in embalm.



With your own sweet-bitter liquids.

The poet believes that her spouse merely engages in such behavior to satiate his demands and is unconcerned about her feelings or desires.

The book "Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law" by Mr. Rich sheds light on the life of a woman whose relationship with men affects both her financial and legal obligations. Her life is devoted to taking care of the responsibilities and customs of the home, and she feels distant and alone. Her existence becomes routine and devoid of opportunities. Her heart wound is so terrible that even bodily agony seems to be unbearable. In her poetry, "Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law," Rich articulates this:

Occasionally, she's allowed the hot water stream to burn her arm, a match to burn her fingernail,

She held her hand in the fuzzy steam directly above the kettle's nose. Most likely, they are angels. Other than the grit flying into her eyes every morning, nothing hurts her anymore.

She broods about the stunted evolution of both men and women in patriarchal society, where minds rule the body and ego has been surrendered to civilization, albeit outwardly adhering to the domestic setting. She spends the majority of her efforts supporting and caring for males, but she manages to exist in a society that does not value her contributions and does not attend to her needs. Ms. Rich states:

Standing there before an open door, shaky and dissatisfied, that cage of cager warns us, "You bird, you tragical machine, is this fertilisante douleur?" Since love is the only thing that comes naturally to you, are you more eager to learn the vault's secrets now? Have you, daughter-in-law, seen any of the home books that her sons never saw in nature?



(The woman Rich played has turned icy.)

In her poem "The Old Playhouse," Ms. Das portrays the same woman who lost her way and doesn't meaningfully participate in social life. The woman is destined to lead a meaningless life into your embrace.

If she has no demanding obligations to fulfill, she is likely to experience a sense of emptiness and futility as she writes:

You referred to me as your wife. I was trained to add sugar to your tea and to give the vitamins at the appropriate time.

groveling under your colossal ego I turned into a dwarf after consuming the enchanted loaf. I murmured reasonable answers to all of your questions, losing all sense of reason and will.

The customary responsibilities of a wife include showing her husband respect, performing her duties well, and attending to his needs and comforts. This permanently dwarfs her and weakens her unique personality. The woman becomes cold and irrational as a result of all this triviality and shallowness in her life. As stated by Ms. Das in her poem "The Stone Age,"

You intended to cradle her and tame a swallow.

So that she wouldn't forget you during the long summer of your love

Not just the undeveloped season and the abandoned houses, but also her character, her will to soar, and the limitless skyways.

Both authors depict the courage and will of women to alter the situation, in addition to providing an account of misery. In their poems, it is sometimes expressed explicitly and other times figuratively. As we can see, Ms. Rich's poetry has greatly influenced modern women's individualism. Her primary concern is that women in the present day need to be seen as valuable, dynamic, and contributing members of society. Aunt Jennifer's Tiger's aunt is an amazing artist. Her skill in weaving is



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unmatched. Rich portrays her as a powerful woman with a free spirit moving at a faster speed. According to Ms. Rich:

The tigers owned by Aunt Jennifer dance across a screen, Bright Topaz inhabitants of a green environment.

They walk with a certain sleek chivalry, not fearing the men beneath the tree.

Fingers flutter through Aunt Jennifer's wool; even the ivory needle is difficult to withdraw.

The enormous weight of the wedding band on Uncle

heftily perches on Aunt Jennifer's hand.

Aunt's scared hands will lie when she's dead.

She was still enslaved to trials that rang in her ears.

The panel she created features tigers that will continue to strut, confident and fearless.

The aunt speaks for all the ladies in the village. She is afraid because she is terrified of being free in her mind and soul, which is a fundamental right that is denied to women under patriarchal culture, even though she was physically oppressed beneath the weight of her uncle's wedding band. Rich is an outspoken opponent of gender norms in relationships. She compares herself to "the red fox, the vixen" in the poem "Leaflets" in an attempt to finally free her instincts from the confines of culture and to question conventionally prescribed roles, one of which is that women's sacrifice of their imaginations is seen as necessary. The poetic self recovers at the same time that the body does.

The past sings only in her nerves, a thrill of self-preservation.

And she leaped for her lair. Her pelt is alive with every strand of hair. Bringing news of the flawless present... She doesn't own any archives. No inheritance, no future—aside from demise And I might be more more so than their sibling



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Who parted the hills into pieces? a selected group of persons

Rich, a feminist poet, is adamant about the value of each and every woman's identity and is committed to reviving a community of women who value nurturing ethics and life appreciation. She states in the poem "An Old House in America":

The you I want to talk to has become your death, so even if people brand me a man-hater, you would have known it was a lie. If I dream of you these days, I know my dreams are of myself, not of you.

Through her poems, Rich aspires to build a society free from the destructive and debilitating impacts of patriarchy, as well as a culture in which women are equal and completely independent of men—not even in terms of meeting their basic physical or emotional needs. She even opposes forced heterosexuality and supports lesbian partnerships. The poem "Splittings" is devoted to her lesbian partner:

However, we are so enmeshed in the historical configurations that I have selected.

I refuse to let myths of separation divide me from her or from myself. I am choosing to love this time around with all of my intelligence, not to suffer needlessly, and not to use her. I will not separate her from my past, which we have not shared.

Rich proposes redefining the term "lesbian" in terms of a cross-cultural lesbian continuum that can represent women's continuous defiance of patriarchal authority. We hope that modern man will go through the same trauma and meet her halfway because she had the guts to embark on the journey of self-transformation. The pursuit of the unified self won't be fully accomplished until then.

Like Rich, Kamala Das, too, expresses her anger against patriarchy in a unique way. However, she also acts as a spokesperson for the intrinsic right of every woman to rebel and protest against all societal factors that work together to obstruct her personal growth. By outlining her personal struggles, she gives a beautiful and pertinent illustration of what it means to be a woman. We see in



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her the essence of facing and conquering the difference as a woman pursues and faces self-awareness and self-fulfillment. She states plainly in "An Introduction" how they tackle this:

I am the beloved and the betrayed; I am a sinner and a saint. I don't have any pleasures or aches that are not yours. To refer to myself as "I"

Women's desire for recognition as distinct individuals is an open challenge to patriarchy. Her poetry is a reflection of her unwavering struggle against unfair male tyranny. Her poetry is full of questions that are rarely addressed and is bursting at the seams to express her sentiments and emotions in an unabashed manner. The Stone Age is a poem she writes.

Ask me, everyone, what he sees in me and why he is referred to as a lion.

A freethinker, tell me the taste of his mouth and the reason behind his hands swaying like a hooded snake.

Prior to it, I grabbed my crotch. Why does he stand up against my breasts and sleep like a massive tree? Ask me about the shortness of life and the shortness of love, and inquire about the nature of bliss and its cost.

In most of her poems, Kamala Das attempts to free herself in order to free a wider group of women by expressing her profound need for independence from the mundane domesticity that surrounded her as a woman. These thought-provoking questions reflect this desire. In "I Shall Some Day," her poetry, she asserts boldly:

One day, I will emerge from the cocoon.

You used morning tea to build around me.

Love phrases hurled from doorways, and naturally, your worn-out need. One day, I'll get wings and soar around as frequently as petals.

Act freely while in the air, my love.

Merely the melancholic remains of a root, it must lie shamelessly on twin beds and weep.



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She discusses the release of women from their shackles of slavery in a world where men are in charge. She demands complete autonomy over every aspect of her life, including selecting her clothing and a partner. Her decision to write her poetry in English is also a statement of her independence. The Indian mainstream society does not accept English as a foreign language. However, she employs it confidently and boldly. She is not shallow or contrived in her affection for this medium. In "An Introduction," she expresses her explicit affinity for this language:

I'm Indian, dark-skinned, and from Malabar; I can write in two languages, speak three, and dream in one. They advised against writing in English since it is not your first tongue. Why don't you all just leave me alone, friends, critics, and visiting cousins? Why not allow me to communicate in any language I choose? My language takes on my own distortions and queerness as I talk.

Everything is mine, and mine alone. It is humorous, perhaps, but it is also sincere. It is half English, half Indian.

You see, it is just as human as I am. It speaks to my pleasures, my yearnings, and my hopes, and it serves me well as a comfort.

Is human speech, the speech of the mind that is here and not there, to crows or shouting to lions?

The argument put up by those who oppose Indian writers using English is that the writer's linguistic depiction of his imagination will be jarred by mother tongue influence, resulting in an intellectually disorganized work. Kamala Das, however, disproved her detractors. She employs the medium with the same force as any native speaker. Her actions consistently reflect her defiant attitude. Her ancestors only believed in following, and she did not believe in pursuing that road. She even refused to wear the saree, an Indian garment and a symbol of decency, in order to reject her femininity as the patriarchal system defined it. Instead, she dressed herself in a shirt and even chopped her hair short.

Adrienne Rich, too, took on the mindset of rejecting, or perhaps honoring, her uniqueness. All women should consider becoming mothers to be a great blessing, but only if they so choose and are both physically and mentally prepared. However, men believe that this level of productivity is theirs, and they want women to do the same. Although women didn't object to it, Rich dares to claim that for many of them, motherhood was imposed upon them by a society whose standards they had to



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live up to. Rich's realistic approach to motherhood, which is completely free of any hint of adulation, is evident in the lines that follow:

This is not the child I wanted.

The only one I've told is you.

I may desire a child in the future, but not right now. This child will be mine, not his, and if I fail, all of the consequences will be mine. Clara, we're not excellent at knowing how to stop these things from happening, and once we have a child, it's ours forever.

All of these statements emphasize how different parenting is from a fulfilling experience in real life. Rich has also transmitted, devoid of any illusions, the patriarchal notion of "the feminine mystique." By portraying women's lives as being solely devoted to childrearing, cooking, cleaning, and other domestic duties as a religion, patriarchal society created the myth of the feminine. Rich made it very evident that a lifetime of never-ending housework cannot make a person happy. While it is true that giving this house all those tender, mundane acts of care takes a lot of time and energy, her poem "Toward the Solstice" highlights the boredom of it all.

A woman's work: planting lilac suckers, cleaning windows, sweeping the stairs, removing wood smoke from cracked paint, brushing the spider's thread aside, and so much more...

Rich is adamant that women need to understand how false the myths that currently exist are. Rich eventually came out as a lesbian, demonstrating her strong opposition to patriarchy. Her collection of "Twenty One Love Poems" celebrates this new kind of partnership that frees women from a reliance on males for sex. She even battled for the recognition and approval of woman-to-woman relationships.

# **CONCLUSION:**

Adrienne Rich and Kamala Das both use feminist themes in their works. Their shared goal is to free the feminine gender from the masculine gender's domination. This is what their poetry is all about. According to Janet Radcliffe Richards, the idea that feminism has a strong fundamental case should



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be understood to imply only that there are compelling reasons to believe that women experience systemic social injustice due to their gender. This assertion should be recognized as the core of feminism.

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