



## **Impact of Feminism in Kamla Das's Literature**

**Mrs. Kavita**

Ph.D. Scholar, MVGU, Jaipur, Under the Supervision of Dr. D. P. Mishra

Email id: [kavita4455@gmail.com](mailto:kavita4455@gmail.com)

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The word feminism has a great significance as it is a social theory or political movement arguing that legal and social restrictions on females must be removed in order to bring about equality of both sexes in all aspects of public and private life.

### **Retrospections on Feminism:-**

**The parts of the soul are present in all, but they are present differently. For the slave has no deliberative faculty at all. The female has a deliberative faculty, but her faculty is without sovereignty.**

**Aristotle**

**Throughout history people have knocked their heads against the riddle of the nature of femininity....Nor will you have escaped worrying over this problem.....**

**-Sigmund Freud**

**Write yourself. Your body must be heard. Only then will the immense resources of the unconscious spring forth.**

**-Helene Cixous**

**Women of every race are only discriminated group  
with no territory of their own, not even a  
neighborhood. In a patriarchy a poor man's house  
may be his castle but even a rich woman's body is  
not her own. Somewhere in our lives, each of us  
needs a free place, a little psychic territory.**

**-Gloria Steinem**

The word feminism implies a variety of beliefs, ideas, movements and ideologies which share a common aim i.e., to define, establish, demand and to defend equal social, political, economic, cultural and human rights for women. It seeks to establish equal opportunity for them especially in education and employment. This belief entitles all people equally to the same legal and civil rights along with liberties regardless of gender which evidently makes clear that there is no scope for discrimination among genders. Unfortunately, women were denied basic rights for a long time and were subjugated heavily under patriarchy which resulted

in number of issues and disorders. **Janet Richards opines :-**

**The essence of feminism has a strong fundamental case intended to mean only that there are excellent reasons for thinking that woman suffer from systematic social injustice because of their sex, the proposition is to be regarded as constituting feminism. (Janet)**

**Similarly, Chaman, Nahal, a noted critic, while defining feminism states:-**

**I define feminism as a mode of existence in which the woman is free of the dependence syndrome. There is dependence syndrome whether it is husband, father, the community or a religious group. When women will free themselves of the dependence syndrome and lead anormal life, my idea of feminism materializes. (Chaman)**

Feminism throws also light on the culture, circumstances and situations which differentiate between genders and their roles. It talks about why women are treated differently and disadvantaged and deprived of many rights and values. It also assumes that such a treatment is actually cultural and can be changed. It seeks a different culture where gender turns meaningless and both men and women would share the same rights and values and thus it is a major move towards a desirable stand or culture in any human society, **Eisenstein interprets feminism and remarks : -**

**This encompasses a concept of social transformation that as part of the eventual liberation of women which change all human relationships for the better. Although, centrally about women, their experience and condition. Feminism is also fundamentally about men and about social change.**

During the Stone Age era of Human history, men used to go out for hunting, food, and this way they would take all such responsibilities which prove that they are better, stronger and also bestowed with supreme power while as women right from the past were projected as human who lack or are deficient of these all traits. Women used to stay back for the domestic daily chores and purposes. From here, the evolution of gender discrimination begins and women are recognized as silent, weak and submissive. Thus, the notion of dividing the sexes was introduced. From generations man was always seen in a higher position and woman was made inferior, weaker and fragile or possessing limited strength or power. Her duty was to maintain household and raise children because they were always considered weak, emotionally unstable and intellectually under developed. Even in this advanced society the notion of women as a weak agent and man the all-powerful outlook still exists. She was seen as property either of her husband or father. She was reduced to a slave. Her whole world was confined to the four walls of her home. The freedom was only a delusion. Man feels proud of his powers. Man can be disloyal to woman but woman has always been seen sincere in her approach. Married women were not seen as a person. Her body, her children and her own property, all belonged to her husband. They reached to such extent where they were seen selling their wives. Even if man killed his wife it was not seen a crime at all but was linked with passion.

This way, traditionally women had been regarded as inferior to men at all levels particularly

physical or intellectual. In both law and theology, we find woman could not possess property in their own names, directly engage in business, or control the disposal of their children or even of their own persons. She was simply considered a property initially of father and later of her husband who would confine her to the four walls for rearing children at home and satiating his sexual wants. She was reduced to a lifeless, emotionless being. This was a practice even during 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century England where women had no legal status, right for property and voting. In ancient Greek Society, women's plight was very miserable and she had a very low status.

Their primary role was to produce children, especially sons. She would be: Confined within the parental home until a husband was chosen — at which she would be in her mid-teens, he at least fifteen years older — the Athenian woman of the citizen class would then be transferred to the home of her husband where she was to fulfill her principal function, of bearing and rearing children.

Of those children (on the average, four or five in number, one or two of whom might die at birth), the sons would be raised within the family — particularly in post-war years when there was a shortage of men — but ordinarily only one daughter, at most, would be reared.

Other girl children would probably be exposed; if they did not die, they might be picked up by slave dealers or prostitutes and prepared for a life of slavery, prostitution, or both. Athenian men had a variety of opportunities to satisfy their sexual drive: boys and other men, courtesans or *hetairai*, prostitute or their own slave women, and wives. The wife's function was, however, primarily that of carrying on the family line and tending the family hearth.

**The wife did not socialize with her husband and his friends; men's social gatherings, even if held in her own, were off-limits to her. As for going to the marketplace or communal well, that was an activity reserved for men or for women slaves.**

(Pomeroy)

This shows clearly the plight of women in the past ancient times was pathetic and pitiable due to number of reasons particularly inequality at almost every level. Earlier both wives and children were believed to be the property of men. It is also true that he doesn't argue directly on women's rights, or their autonomy, rights and values. However, Plato in his *Republic* book V forwards his belief that both woman and man are to be Guardians of the ideal State. In his ideal State, the fundamental social roles (rulers, defenders and producers) are to be carried out by all.

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