

RESEARCH ARTICLE

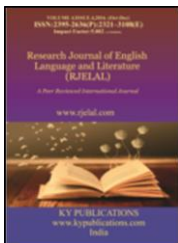


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A FEMINISTIC VIEW OF MASTERY OVER WOMEN'S WRITING IN KAMALA DAS' STORY SEDATION: AN IDENTITY CREATED THROUGH WRITING

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ABSTRACT

My paper is based on feminism which speaks about a female writer in the story *Sedation*, who is caught in the web of marriage and familial responsibilities. It also depicts the narrator's experience of the eraser of her true self. It focuses on Marriage and family which play a key role in controlling the mindset of the woman and her actions in the story. My focal point is on monitoring of woman's interests, especially writing, by the men within the family as well as outside the family. I would stress upon the struggles the narrator undergoes to overcome the problem. My emphasis is on the writing which reflects the narrator's life. It also speaks of an instinct of writing which is killed and how it later springs up due to the unconscious drive which is the result of the storage of all the thoughts, memories and feelings that seem disturbing in the mind. Application of the techniques of Gynocriticism : Psychodynamic approach and the construction of a female frame work of the analysis of women's literature. It is an attempt to prove that the narrator's writing is a way to express unconscious wishes in a publicly accepted manner and that it is a gynotext.

Key words: Feminism, writing, marriage, family, society, self-identity, gynocriticism.

Introduction

Madhavi Kutty is a renowned Indian poet, novelist, short-story writer, essayist and memoirist. She is famously known to the world of writing as Kamala Das. She is a prolific writer and has written several taboo-breaking collections of short stories and poems. Her characters speak about woman's quest for freedom from sexual and domestic oppression. Many readers as well as writers are empowered by her words. *The Kept Woman and other stories* is the last collection of writings that Kamala Das compiled herself before her death. *Sedation* is a story which is extracted from the collection for my study. It speaks about the struggle of a woman in finding herself being killed and after realization she attempts to give rebirth to her true

self through writing. The writer attacks misinterpretation of her writing. She questions male pattern of representing women in literature. Gynocriticism intends to construct a female frame work of the analysis of women's literature. It is an attempt to apply the approaches of Gynocriticism.

Application of Gynocriticism

Gynocriticism or gynocritics is the term coined in the seventies by Elaine Showalter to describe a new literary project intended to construct a female frame work for the analysis of women's literature. She described the change in the late 1970s as a shift of attention from 'androtexs' to 'gynotexs'. The subjects of gynocriticism are the history, styles, themes, genres and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female

creativity; the trajectory of the individual or collective female career; and the evolution or laws of a female literary tradition. It examines the female struggle for identity and the social construct of gender. *Sedation* is a story which speaks about the struggle of the protagonist for self identity and also pays way to examine the social construct of gender. Female identity is sought free from the masculine definitions and oppositions. Gynocriticism challenges women suffering envy of male and feelings of inadequacy and injustice, combined with feelings of intellectual inferiority. Pyschodynamic approach is based on Sigmund Freud's theory that creativity arises from the tension between conscious reality and unconscious drives and that the creative product is a way to express unconscious wishes in a publicly accepted manner. Freud believed that the unconscious mind stored all the thoughts, memories and feelings that disturbed the mind and later were expressed.

First of all I would like to brief the situation of the woman who has experienced the eraser of her true self in the story. The narrator in the story *Sedation* gets her uterus removed and she speaks of a scar that symbolises a mark of a mother which never allows woman to forget her motherly roles and responsibilities with regard to her children. The situation makes her feel uncomfortable as she is totally immersed in the world of motherhood which indeed strengthens her familial relations. Society forces the concept of motherhood on every woman to such an extent that if she fails then life for her seems to be meaningless. Women are experiencing a bitter thought that describes woman as unwomanly if they are not able to give birth to children. And such a thought forces women to find it hard to digest. She tries to deny motherhood but she can't do that completely. But still she regains the strength and stands boldly to express that she isn't meant for the societal purposes.

Women's task is to get involved in household chores rather than giving preference to one's choice. Every woman is expected to take up the role of an ideal house wife as it is accepted as an important assignment of marriage. In the earlier stage even the narrator was comforted with the role of an ideal wife but later she realizes that all her

interests are buried then she feels that she is in a cage, in a suffocative atmosphere. The familial bonding of marriage has strengthened her cage. Marriage forces the narrator to dependency. The development of a family can happen only when a woman gets her identity erased in a procedural manner. The narrator feels like a voiceless, flightless bird with no liberation. Marriage gives men the licence of withholding women's power in the assumption of comforting family. The self is killed in the institution of marriage and family. The narrator enjoyed writing in her youth. She found solace in writing. But her neighbours pitied her husband as she neither showed interest in cooking classes nor in learning embroidery like other women. Instead she joined tennis and gym to safe guard herself and her interests. But later at certain period of time she had given up writing and got indulged in cooking, washing and cleaning and she adds that society is satisfied as it has squashed her dreams of writing. Society's plans have caught her up. Within the restrictions of marriage she wants to re-emerge as a writer and express herself.

The writer highlights the control of men over women's writing. She focuses on the monitoring of women's interests by men. The narrator corrects her father who monitors her and her code of behaviour and the kind of writing she does. Her husband monitors her actions and doesn't permit her to write. Even the editors expect her to write according to the demands of lustful and commercial mentality. The editors triggered the narrator to write about sex. She tears herself to shreds to feed her readers. She is very familiar to her readers as she is in-depth in depicting her expressions as a writer. She speaks of the bonding she has with her readers and feels such bonding as stronger than those she has with her family members. Though the city and whole world has turned unoriginal she wants to continue as a writer that is because of her attachment with the readers. She daringly expresses that she wanted to be Anna Karenina and madam Bovary when she was young. Dostoevsky's *Anna Karenina* tells of the doomed love affair between the sensuous and rebellious Anna and the dashing officer, Count Vronsky. The tragedy unfolds as Anna rejects her passionless

marriage and thereby exposes herself to the hypocrisies of the society. Gustave Flaubert's debut novel *Madame Bovary* is the story which focuses on a doctor's wife, Emma Bovary, who has adulterous affairs and lives beyond her means in order to escape the banalities and emptiness of provincial life.

Writing is seen as a strong medium to express oneself in depth. She experiences criticism as a writer and punishes herself for the kind of writing she had done earlier. She was blamed that she had brought disgrace to the family and she was also haunted by the thought that she had brought unhappiness and misery to the family members.

At certain point of her age the narrator realizes that she was wearing a masked skin till then. She feels that she is buried within her body which is not hers completely. She was sick of every task that was done by a house wife which stopped her from sparing sometime for her writing.

Writing comforts her and she finds satisfied in being oneself, in being awake and that can be a platform to express her true self. The love she had for her books, which was buried in her past, was not dead. Her conscience was awakened and paved way for her undying thoughts. She criticises the society which implements its horrible plans on her life. She says that her father was wrong in blaming the sleeping pills and rather accepts that she was conscious when she started writing. She is very bold and confident in expressing herself. When she is deprived of writing then her impulsive feature is checked. Her writing skills are stifled. She feels as if she is in a coffin that is sound proof. Her voice which is represented through writing is stifled.

Conclusion

Virginia Woolf in 'A Room of one's own' suggests that language use is gendered. She opines that woman needs entirely different sentence which suits for woman's use and feels that there was no ready-made sentence for women when they started writing. Those were men's sentences which were ready to use and those didn't suit for women's use. So, the women writers had to take the road which was not taken by men. Jane Austen rejected it and used sentence proper for her own use. A woman's sentence is featured with the clauses that are linked

in looser sequences, rather than carefully balanced and patterned as in male writing. Feminists are concerned with language and psychology. There exists a form of language which is inherently feminine. The writer breaks the norm of using the sentences which are carefully balanced and patterned.

Throughout the story the narrator struggles as she is caught between conscious reality and unconscious drives. Her writing is a way to express unconscious wishes in a publicly accepted manner. So, I would conclude that it is a gynotext.

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