

Q. Discuss how Kamala Das exposes the futility of loveless and hopeless marital relationships in the poem My Grandmother's House.

Or

Critically appreciate Kamala Das' poem My Grandmother's House.

Answer: Kamala Das, Malayalam pen name Madhavikutty, Muslim name Kamala Surayya, was an Indian author who wrote openly and frankly about female sexual desire and the experience of being an Indian woman. Here the poetess suffers from an acute sense of alienation after having left this place after her marriage.

The very opening lines of the poem capture alive the poetess' nostalgic mood. She is reminded of the happiest days of her childhood which she spent in the company of her grandmother. She was deeply attached to her grandmother who was very caring and affectionate to her. She was emotionally destabilised after the death of her grandmother and felt almost heart-broken. The intensity of her grief is suggestively conveyed by the few dots the poem. It was her disenchantment with her loveless marriage which reminded her of her grandmother's pure and selfless love.

The poetess often longs to visit her grandmother's house to which she was emotionally attached since her childhood. It has been a place of security and protection which is sadly missing in her new house in the city. She would like to peep through the dust-ridden or coloured panes of windows which were shut after the death of the grandmother. She would like to listen and feel the still atmosphere prevailing in the house. It is this longing to revisit her grandmother's house that adds to her sense of frustration and hopelessness. The darkness of her grandmother's house can have no terrifying impact on her. She would like to gather some darkness, some memories of the grandmother's house and bring them to her present city residence. The very memories of her grandmother's house will have a soothing impact on her loveless and hopeless married life. the poet says how her frustration and disenchantment in the marital life forced her to go in for extra-marital relationship. The poetess often longs to visit her grandmother's house to which she was emotionally attached since her childhood. Unlike her miserable city life with her husband, it had been a place of security and genuine love for her. Here the poetess informs her dear husband that he can never believe the intensity of love that she received from her grandmother. He can never realize that she was extremely proud of her grandmother's house where she was deeply loved by her grandmother. It is her separation from her grandmother's house after marriage that has ruined her life for ever. It is loveless and hopeless married life that has crippled her sense of pride and love which she used to have in her grandmother's house. She has become a beggar for love who knocks helplessly at strangers' doors to receive at least in a small measure. She has almost lost her way in search of genuine and selfless love.

Kamala Das exposes the futility of loveless and hopeless marital relationships in the concluding lines of the poem. It shows the agony and humiliation of a married woman who is forced to seek extra-marital relationships to seek love for her emotional satisfaction. It is the mood of nostalgia that dominates the closing phase of the poem. The poet is reminded of her grandmother's house where received love and safety in her childhood. She has lost all her identity and freedom in her loveless relationship.

To conclude, Kamala Das is a contemporary female poet from India. She can most definitely be considered a "confessional" poet, because her poems often focus on her personal life, including many aspects of her life that other people would prefer to keep private. Almost every poem of Das speaks volumes about her representational nostalgic mood as well as her acute sense of crisis for feminine identity; and My Grandmother's House is not an exception to that.