



Research Paper

Feminist Reading Of “She” By Lakshmi Kannan: A Literary Analysis

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Abstract	Manuscript Information
<p>This study presents a feminist reading of the poem “She” by Lakshmi Kannan, focusing on the representation of female identity, voice, and resistance within the text. The analysis examines how the poem challenges traditional patriarchal constructions of womanhood and redefines “she” as a symbol of autonomy, emotional depth, and lived female experience. Using feminist literary criticism, the study explores themes such as the reclaiming of female identity, the expression of suppressed voices, and the critique of socially imposed gender roles. It further highlights how the poem portrays women not as passive figures but as resilient individuals capable of emotional strength and silent resistance. The findings suggest that “She” contributes significantly to feminist discourse by affirming women’s subjectivity and questioning patriarchal norms in literature and society.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ISSN No: 2583-7397 ▪ Received: 08-07-2024 ▪ Accepted: 25-08-2024 ▪ Published: 30-08-2024 ▪ IJCRM:3(4); 2024: 239-241 ▪ ©2024, All Rights Reserved ▪ Plagiarism Checked: Yes ▪ Peer Review Process: Yes
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Keywords: Lakshmi Kannan, English literature, Feminist literature, Female identity, and Representation of women.

INTRODUCTION

Feminist literary criticism examines how texts represent gender, power relations, and the construction of female identity in society. It seeks to challenge patriarchal ideologies embedded in literature and highlight the voices and experiences of women that have historically been marginalised or silenced. Within this critical framework, poetry becomes an important space for expressing female subjectivity and resistance. The poem “She” by Lakshmi Kannan is a significant contribution to feminist writing as it focuses on the identity, emotions, and lived experiences of women. Rather than defining women through traditional social roles, the poem presents “she” as an autonomous figure with inner strength and individuality. It shifts attention from external expectations imposed by society to the internal world of women, emphasizing their thoughts, struggles,

and resilience. This study aims to analyse “She” from a feminist perspective by exploring how the poem represents female identity, critiques patriarchal norms, and highlights women’s emotional and psychological strength. It further investigates how the poem contributes to feminist discourse by redefining womanhood beyond conventional boundaries.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the role and performance in “She” by Lakshmi Kannan in a feminist analysis.
2. To analyse the representation of women in the poem “She” by Lakshmi Kannan.

Role and Performance of “She” by Lakshmi Kannan in Feminist Analysis

The poem “She” by Lakshmi Kannan can be effectively studied through feminist literary criticism by focusing on the concepts of role and performance. These ideas help explain how women’s identities are shaped, controlled, and sometimes resisted within patriarchal society. The poem questions fixed gender roles and reveals the tension between socially imposed expectations and a woman’s inner self. In her poignant poem “She,” Lakshmi Kannan explores the profound disconnect between a woman’s socially constructed role and her authentic inner life in a patriarchal society. Utilizing a feminist lens, the poem exposes how women are forced into performing an outward image of domestic bliss and personal fulfilment while enduring deep-seated psychological alienation and a loss of identity.

- 1. Gender Roles Assigned by Society:** From a feminist perspective, women are traditionally assigned roles such as mother, wife, daughter, and caregiver. These roles define women in relation to others rather than as independent individuals. In “She,” such roles are implied as socially constructed expectations that limit female identity and agency.
- 2. Performance of Femininity:** The poem reflects the idea that gender is not only assigned but also performed in daily life. Women are expected to behave in ways that align with patriarchal norms, such as being obedient and emotionally controlled; prioritizing family over self; remaining silent about personal struggles; and displaying patience and sacrifice. From a feminist perspective, these actions are not natural traits but socially enforced performances that women are conditioned to adopt.
- 3. Conflict Between Inner Self and External Role:** A key feminist interpretation of the poem is the distinction between the public role (society’s expectations) and the private self (emotions and identity). While society sees only the performed role, the poem reveals the emotional depth, struggles, and individuality of “she.” This highlights the suppression of authentic female identity under social pressure.
- 4. Resistance within Performance:** Although the woman continues to perform her roles, the poem suggests an underlying resistance. Her endurance and emotional strength can be seen as silent forms of protest against patriarchal control. A feminist reading recognizes this as a subtle yet powerful form of agency.

Representation of Women in the Poem “She” by Lakshmi Kannan

In the poem “She” by Lakshmi Kannan, women are represented as complex, emotionally rich, and resilient individuals rather than passive or one-dimensional figures. The poem moves beyond traditional patriarchal portrayals of women and presents them as subjects with inner strength, identity, and lived

experience. From a feminist perspective, women in the poem are shown not only through their social roles but also through their emotional and psychological depth. They are often expected to fulfill duties such as caregiving, sacrifice, and emotional support, yet the poem reveals that these roles do not define their complete identity. The representation also highlights the silent struggles of women, emphasizing how their pain, endurance, and sacrifices often remain unspoken. Despite these limitations, women are portrayed as strong and enduring, capable of coping with emotional and social pressures. Overall, the poem represents women as:

- Emotionally strong
- Socially constrained but internally independent
- Silent sufferers of patriarchal expectations
- Resilient and enduring individuals

Role and Contribution of “She” by Lakshmi Kannan to English Literature

The poem “She” by Lakshmi Kannan holds an important place in contemporary English literature, especially within feminist writing. It contributes to literature by redefining womanhood, challenging patriarchal norms, and presenting a deeper understanding of female identity and experience.

- 1. Representation of Female Identity:** The poem represents women as complex individuals rather than stereotypes. It moves beyond traditional roles such as mother, wife, or caregiver and presents “she” as a symbol of individuality and inner strength.
- 2. Contribution to Feminist Literature:** The poem makes a significant contribution to feminist literary discourse by challenging patriarchal structures, highlighting women lived experiences, emphasizing female subjectivity, and questioning gender-based limitations.
- 3. Redefinition of Womanhood:** It contributes to English literature by redefining womanhood as independent, emotionally strong, resilient, and multi-dimensional. This challenges conventional literary portrayals of women as passive or secondary figures.
- 4. Expression of Silent Struggles:** The poem highlights the emotional and psychological struggles of women that are often overlooked in traditional literature. This adds depth and realism to the representation of female experience in English poetry.
- 5. Use of Feminist Perspective:** By focusing on the gap between social roles and inner identity, the poem presents a strong feminist perspective that enriches modern literary analysis and criticism.
- 6. Contribution to Modern English Poetry:** “She” adds value to modern English literature by strengthening feminist themes in poetry, encouraging gender-sensitive

- interpretation, and expanding the scope of contemporary poetic expression.
7. **Emotional Depth and Realism:** The poem contributes emotional authenticity by portraying women's pain, endurance, and resilience in a realistic and relatable manner.
 8. **Challenge to Patriarchal Norms:** It questions socially constructed gender expectations, thereby contributing to the critical examination of patriarchy in literature.
 9. **Symbolic Representation:** The use of "She" as a universal symbol allows the poem to represent all women, making it widely applicable in literary studies.
 10. **Overall Literary Importance:** Overall, "She" by Lakshmi Kannan contributes to English literature by enriching feminist discourse, redefining gender identity, and offering a powerful voice to women's experiences and struggles.
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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The feminist reading of "She" by Lakshmi Kannan focuses on the representation of women's identity, roles, and lived experiences within a patriarchal framework. The poem presents "she" as a symbol of womanhood that goes beyond traditional definitions such as mother, wife, or caregiver. Instead, it highlights women as individuals with emotional depth, inner strength, and personal identity. The analysis shows how the poem critiques socially imposed gender roles and the performance of femininity expected from women. It also emphasizes the gap between external roles and internal reality, revealing women's silent struggles and emotional resilience. Thus, "She" challenges stereotypical images of women and redefines them as complex human beings with strength, identity, and agency.

The feminist analysis of "She" by Lakshmi Kannan concludes that the poem is a powerful representation of female identity and resistance. It challenges patriarchal norms that confine women to fixed roles and instead portrays them as complex, strong, and self-aware individuals. The poem highlights both the emotional burdens placed on women and their quiet resilience in facing societal expectations. Ultimately, "She" contributes to feminist literary discourse by redefining womanhood as independent, multifaceted, and enduring, while also exposing the limitations imposed by patriarchal structures.

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