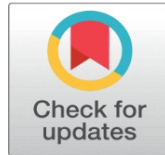


A POETIC EXPLORATION OF LOVE BY KAMALA DAS

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ABSTRACT

A member of the original four of pioneers of Indian English poetry after the country's independence, Kamala Das is often regarded as one of the most remarkable poets to emerge from this group. Her presentation of love, sex, and self was so daring, brisk, fiery, and vivid that it shook the very basis of the literary world that was dominated by men. The majority of her work is comprised of love and sexual poetry. She believes that the final manifestation of love is divine, and that it brings the lovers together in an inseparable manner. The term "love" refers to an intense and long-lasting emotional affection, typically for another individual. There has been a consistent occurrence of the subject of love throughout the course of literary history. Love, in contrast to other topics, is characterized by a multitude of twists and turns, as well as a variety of alternative endings. This makes love an intriguing subject in literature. The concept of love is portrayed in a number of different ways throughout Kamala Das's poetry. The numerous facets of love that are described in Kamala Das's poetry serve as the basis for this research. As a result, her poetry is entirely about her own experiences, focusing on her highly felt need for love and her inability to successfully sustain a healthy marriage.

Keywords: Love, Desire, Sex, Poetry, Death, Suffering, Sensibility, etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

Kamala Das is an important figure whose bold and honest voice has re-energized Indian writing in English. Das has attempted to touch and feel life in a meaningful way and there lies a dualism in her writing in English, in which soul is contrasted to body. Kamala Das writes in her usual, frank open-mindedness, about married life or man-woman relationship in many of her poems. Kamala Das writes in her usual, frank open-mindedness, about married life or man-woman relationship in many of her poems. She frequently complains about man's callousness and wantonness and woman's suffering on that count. These confessional poems are intensely personal, highly subjective. There's no "persona" in her poems. The themes are nakedly embarrassing and focus exclusively upon the pain, anguish and ugliness of life at the expense of pleasure and beauty. In the recent times, there has been steady hike in the production of imaginative literature in English by the Indian writers. The consistent efforts by the bright Indians in putting their bright ideas and heightened sensibility in English language have drawn worldwide attention. During 20th century, there emerged a great feeling among the poets, writers and scholars of different countries writing in English to establish, the identity of their own writings as a distinctive force of their own cultural heritage and literary enterprises.

2. LOVE AS A DOMINANT THEME

She seems to be least concerned about the lover's needs. She knows very well that the man has the desire of her female body only. He is not emotionally involved, still she expresses her deep desire to be loved by her man. She does not confine herself to the boundaries of emotional aspect of love. She asserts boldly her female desire for sexual intimacy with her lover. She rejects the concept of traditional morality. She is the first woman poet in Indian English Literature who has talked about female sexuality openly, boldly and without any hesitation at all. She seems to be a feminist to the core who defies the patriarchal norms of society that imposes certain restrictions on women's sexual freedom and choices. She supports both, the physical aspects as well as the emotional and mental aspects of love. This may be the reason why we come across the detailed description of female physical organs in one of her most famous poems, 'The Looking Glass':

*"Gift him what makes you woman,
the scent of Long hair,
the Musk of sweat between the breasts,
the warm shock of Menstrual blood,
and all your endless female hungers".*

Kamala Das very frankly advises the woman to offer her lover each and everything that is associated with her femininity. It clearly includes all her sexual organs and each and every part of her physical body. She believes that it is absolutely necessary to gift her physical self to her lover, to obtain fulfilment in their love relationship. The complete and unconditional surrendering of selves is important to taste the feeling of oneness.

..... When he And I were one, we were neither Male nor female. There were no more Words left, all words lay imprisoned. In the ageing arms of night. During this moment of deep and intense love between the lover and his beloved, their biological differences that separate them into a male and a female, vanishes. Now, they have entered into each other's existence and thus have become one body, one soul. They do not need words any more to express their feelings. Kamala Das seems to have an obsession for love. For her: The only truth that matters is That all this love is mine to give It does not matter that I seek For it a container, as alms Seek a begging bowl.... Here the poet is desperately willing to gift all her love and searches for a suitable container that is large enough to hold her deep and sincere emotions of love. The unconditional love is the only important thing for her in her whole life. She cannot dream of a life, devoid of love. A loveless life has no charm for her. She would prefer death instead: I want to be loved And If love is not to be had, I want to be dead, just dead.

Kamala Das's poetry revolves around the themes of love and sex. As well narrated by K.N. Daruwalla writes, "Kamala Das is a poet of love and pain, one stalking the other through a near neurotic world," in this regard. There is an underlying feeling of hurt all throughout. The weave and woof of her literary fabric are love, the slack animal hungers of the flesh, hurt, and humiliation. She seldom ever leaves her private world.

The primary emotion in a woman's heart is love. She longs to be united with a guy in order to experience love, but she becomes frustrated and disillusioned when it turns into lust and physical pleasures. Her poetry explores the pleasure of sex and unfulfilled love. K.R.S. Iyengar states: "Under the Indian sun, calmness of fulfillment eludes forever; sensuality entices irresistibly but fails to satisfy; feeling and introspection but sounds the depths of oceanic frustration." Sex defiles itself repeatedly, and love is crucified in it.

In her poetry, Kamala Das chronicles her personal observations and experiences, including her unfulfilled love, sexual exploitation, frustration, and disappointment that she endured in a culture controlled by men. She constructs a world that is emotionally cold and unproductive, where inner emptiness is hidden by external delight. Eunuchs that dance represent the repressed inner urges in our world. In them, the poetess discovers an objective way to relate her own unmet romantic desires. The sterile dance, and hence the poet's unfulfilled and ravenous love for the woman, is symbolized by the eunuchs' dance. Through her dancing eunuchs, the poetess expresses her own dissatisfaction and disappointment with love. Her attention is constantly drawn to the tragedy of her own situation:

*"The voices
Were harsh, their songs melancholy; they sang of Lovers dying and of children
left unborn*
Some beat their drums; others beat their sorry breasts. And wailed, and

writhed in vacant ecstasy."

The performance of "Cymbals/Richly clashing and anklets jingling/jingling..." contrasts with their "vacant ecstasy," which implies an insurmountable gap between their inside sexual rot and sterility and their outward passion.

Kamala Das skillfully crafted a world that is dry, arid, dehumanizing, and exploitative, marked by a glaring lack of affection and a preponderance of male sexual exploitation of women. She visualizes using appropriate and evocative imagery this "vacant ecstasy" reality. "It is a world where the lovers are more often than not pitted with pox, and the lover's mouth is a dark cavern, where stalactites of uneven teeth gleam," says K.N. Daruawalla in reference to Kamala Das's universe. In the universe of "The Freaks," a world of "tired lusts", a woman in a hysteric is seen "lashing at pillows with banded arms" while her husband turns on the light and gives her a pathetic look.

The male is pathetic just by virtue of his gender. Love, the one thing she desires, is never given to her by him. He has "petals drying at the edges" on his lips. He pulls away, and she can feel the "loss of love I never once received" as she kisses the "burnt cheeks" and the "dry grass" of his hair. It is a society that exalts extramarital affairs. The sensibility of Kamala Das appears to be "obsessively preoccupied with love and lust, finding lust simply eating itself to the point of nausea and love invariably petering out into lust."

Kamala Das is obsessed with love, sex, and frustration in poem after poetry. Kamala Das was married at the young age of sixteen, but she was unable to untie the knot and find love in the married life. Love turned out to be a façade. She was bound by the boredom and tedium of sexuality:

She provides a broad overview of women's search for love. Her great desire to be fulfilled in love is what it is:

*"I met a man, loved him. Call
Him not by any name, he is every man Who wants a woman just as
I am every
Woman who seeks love. In him....
The hungry haste of rivers, in me
The ocean's tireless
Waiting"*

The poetry she writes is known for its naked and honest depiction of sexuality. A woman's mind is "willed to race towards love" in "The Freaks," in stark contrast to a man's mind, which merely trips "idly over puddles of Desire" (i.e., sexual desire and action). When it comes to "skin's lazy hungers," he never disappoints. Every woman's heart, like Kamala Das's, breaks in such a heartless and cruel environment.

*"An empty cistern, waiting Through long hours, fills itself
With coiling snakes of silence....I'm a freak."*

The woman's intense want for love is revealed by the repetition of "Loved and loved, and loved," yet she is unable to experience it because her male spouse embodies lovelessness. The poetess laments the end of love in a patriarchal society in "The Sea Shore":

*"I see you go away from me
And feel the loss of love I never once received."*

In her love poems, Kamala Das also explores the concept of dual relationships, or the profound feelings of belonging to two people or places at once. A woman, who is married, pursues love by running from one man to another. "The Testing of the Sirens" conveys the emotion vividly:

*"I am happy, just being with you. But you
You love another."*

In 'An Apology to Gautama,' Kamala Das so movingly portrays the anguish of a betrayed woman who is a part of one but holds dear the memory of another.

*"Another's name brings tears, yours A calm, a smile, and yet
Gautama, That other owns me, while your arms Hold my very
soul."*

The wife in "The Stone Age" protests and goes "at another's door" when her husband isn't around because she needs love and he refuses to provide it to her. Her 'come and go like rain' is observed by the neighbours through peepholes. There is complete candor in the description of the sexual union.

The film "Conflagration" depicts sexual desire with a savage honesty. A man's wife can be led astray by his loveless sex. She seeks love with a series of men, but she is devastated to learn that they are all sexual monsters who lack any real feelings for her. Her husband becomes a symbol for all males.

In the context of non-marital romantic relationships Kamala Das does not condone adultery or infidelity, she does defend the pursuit of a perfect love relationship, contentment and safety. She draws parallels between the legendary love story of Radha and Krishna and interracial relationships:

*"Vrindaban lives on in every woman's mind, And the flute, luring her
From home and her husband,
Who later asks her of the long scratch on the brown Aureola of her breast... "*

Kamala Das uses her writing to express a woman's enduring need for fulfillment and affection.

Kamala Das has come under heavy fire for her infatuation with sex and love. "The sexual mud that has ever clung to Kamala Das's image has led her critics, pitifully enough, to associate love with personality and her poetry," says Anisur Rehman. How does Vimala Rao feel about exposing her promiscuous side? "Kamala Das ultimately seems to be a decadent poet...a victim of her own shortcomings, unable even to take charge of her art." "The never-ending lust, the ocean's ceaseless waiting, the woman's sexual lust, and then the poet's lust for experience, for sights as well as insights," observes another reviewer, Davendra Kohli. Given that Kamala Das writes from the depth of her personal experiences, the accusation of fixation with love and lust is not credible. Nobody can dispute how authentically she expresses herself in her poetry. She reveals the cruelty and stupidity of sex. She finds that without emotional connection, sex is pointless and unproductive. She longs for spiritual fulfillment, which she regrettably cannot find. In fact, Kamala Das's primary focus is love—desire, true love, and love on many levels.

In her love poetry, Kamala Das adds a fresh depth by showing her connection to an ancient Indian tradition that stems from epics. Not only does this set her apart from the competition, but her Nayar heritage also fortifies the confessional vein that runs through her poetry. This synthesis of Indian and Western traditions is, thus, central to her love poetry. Accordingly, this article makes an effort to analyze the love poems of Kamala Das.

The central theme of Kamala Das' poems revolves around the pursuit of love. Truly, she says, "I "started to create poems with the shameful intention of courting a man." Consequently, love becomes the central focus, and she uses love as a means to find herself. Her love poems can be categorized into two stages, reflecting her interest in different aspects of love. In the first stage, her fixation on physical love shines through, but in the second, her leaning toward ideal love becomes more apparent. She has in mind the mythical relationship between Radha and Krishna when she talks of ideal love. She longs for a relationship that allows her to be free without constraint. The poem "The Old Playhouse" contains her ideal love concept.

*"...Love is Narcissus at the waters' edge, haunted By its own lovely face, and
yet it must seek at last
An end, a pure, total freedom, it must will the mirrors To shatter and the kind night
to erase the water."*

The lovers in the narcissistic phase are unable to overcome the impediment of their egos, which prevents them from merging. Their pride is shackling them. However, it is not a permanent state because it evolves to achieve "total freedom." As the perfect love journey progresses to its second stage, the lovers push past their egos or merging with each other narrows ourselves, as it guarantees ultimate freedom. In Radha and Krishna's love, the poet sees such a model relationship. Despite her marital status, she imagines herself to be Radha, the ideal lover who seeks out Krishna. Because of this, the Abhisarika school of Sanskrit poetry becomes relevant to her work. In addition to this, her carefree approach to sexuality and love is reminiscent of Sahaja practice.

However, bhakti is nonexistent in Kamala Das. The bond between her and Krishna is one of pure humanity. "I was searching for an ideal lover," she admits. I was on the hunt for the one who abandoned Radha in favor of Mathura. As a result, the poet juggles two realities at once: the real one, where "skin communicated love" (love as a synonym for passion) and the fantastical one, Vrindavan.

The pointlessness of her quest becomes apparent to her quickly, though. Instead of helping, the treatment makes her sicker. When her husband doesn't show her love, she seeks out a "band of cynics." Rather than kindness, what she really needs is love. They don't attend to her emotional needs; they merely play with her body. Using the brutality and savagery depicted in "Convicts," they satisfy the "skin's lazy hungers." "That was the only kind of love," she said, her voice cracking like a pair of inmates gnawing on a clod at midday. A confessional poet would often write about such private misery. If it meant saving face, she would.

"...flaunt, at/Times, a grand flamboyant lust." And consequently, "with a cheap toy's indifference" she enters other's lives, and makes every trap of lust

'A temporary home.'

She feels trapped in a sexual limbo, tormented by the anguish of never having found a real partner and the crushing disappointment that comes from it. She realizes that her body is not a sufficient compass and that it is a shackle that keeps her from falling in love.

From the poetry 'The Prisoner' she wrote:-

*"As the convict studies His prison's geography I
study the trappings
Of your body, dear love, For I must someday find An
escape from it's snare."*

She learns the hard way that the fleeting and sweet pleasures that the body can provide are not worth pursuing. Trying to find genuine love in a world full of philanderers is pointless because love that depends on physical intimacy will eventually fade away. In her quest for true love and happiness, she visits the fantastical realms of Vrindavan and Krishna. In her mind, she is Radha, and she finds solace in Krishna's embrace. Beyond that, when she is in Krishna's presence, she might feel free from the shackles of her superego and the strict social code.

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we may assert that Kamala Das's evolution on the horizon of Indian English poetry proved a revolution. Her daring, dauntless and downright depiction of love, sex and self-created ripples in the male-chauvinist literary world. Her poems are matrix of voyeuristic variegated fantasies. Her transformational journey from a tumultuous childhood to wobbling married woman was irrevocably horrible. Kamala Das is an important figure whose bold and honest voice has re-energized Indian writing in English. Das has attempted to touch and feel life in a meaningful way and there lies a dualism in her writing in English, in which soul is contrasted to body.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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