



Kamla Das : A Voice of Protest Against The ILL- Treatment given to Women in Indian Marriages.

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Kamala Das is one of the most significant poetic voices in Indo-Anglican literature. She has distinguished herself as the writer of bold, frank and unorthodox poetry. Her poetic output is quite small. She has published three volumes of poems entitled *Summer in Calcutta* (1965) 'The descendants' (1967) and 'The old play house' and other 'Poems' 1973. Besides, she has written her autobiography 'My story' and a number of controversial essays. The essays bear the titles like *I have studied all men and why not more than one husband*. Kamala Das's real name is ModhviKully and she comes from a very conservative & orthodox family. She was married at the early age of fifteen and her marriage personal experiences colour all her writings. Her poetry is the poetry of frustration & disillusionment in love.

Kamala Das is the spokes person of Indian feminine sensibility. Her poetry is the poetry of protest against male domination in marriages. She is against hollow marital bonds which the women in India cannot untie. The role of an Indian wife is no better than of a domestic servant in Indian household. Besides, she is an object of lust for her husband. Das rebelled against this kind of treatment. She becomes the flag bearer of liberation moment of Indian women. She has shocked many conservative readers with the description of intimate details of her sexual life. She has been misunderstood by many a reader. She is not advocating extra marital relationship in which she was forced to indulge in her quest of love. She is not a sex maniac. She craved for emotional security & not freedom from marriage.

Das is a confessional poet. Her poetry is largely autobiographical. It is all about herself and an acute desire for fulfillment in love. For this reason she had been labeled as a confessional poet. Her poetry is confessional in the sense that she reveals to the reader her secret thoughts & feelings. This she does without any sense of shame or guilt she frankly says.

***"I must let my mind striptease
I must extrude autobiography"***

Das poetry is the poetry of her love longings. She speaks of her despair in love. This she does with boneless & frankness. Her husband treated her like an object to satisfy his sexual

desire. While she craved for emotional bonding in her quest of true love she slid in to a life of sexual anarchy with one lover following another she says;

***“After that her love become a swivel door,
When one went out, another come in”***

Unlike Donne, Das's poetry is the poetry of unfulfilled love. Donne celebrates the glory of being in love. Das sings of despair in love. The central theme of her poetry is the failure to find emotional fulfillment and happiness in love. The opening poem of her first anthology collection *Summer in Calcutta* sets the tone and temper (spirit) of her poetic effort. It has been given the title 'Dance of Eunuchs.' The title of the poem is ironical (The whirling movement of the dance is contrasted with rottenness inside. The poet has been successful in giving the objective correlative of the inner vacuity.) The poem 'The Freaks' brings out the emotional sterility of the poet - persona through the images of revulsion and horror. The cheeks of the lover are such stained and his mouth is horrible like 'a dark cavern.' The ugly imagery underlines the speaker attitude of rejection and negative their hearts are like 'empty cisterns' that are empty of the life giving water of love. The picture of a broken relationship is very well brought out in the poem 'The Looking Glass. The woman surrenders herself completely to the male domination in the act of making love. She gifts him her 'endless female hungers' unfortunately the love of her man is no more than physical passion. He deserts her never to return. She only hears "His last voice calling out her name."

'The old play house' highlights the pitiable and the miserable lost of an Indian wife. She has no identity of her own and her individuality is frilled the moment she enters her husband's household. The poem becomes a memorandum of protest against male- domination in arranged Indian marriages. The poet use the metaphor of the old play house for her mind. The phrase evokes the memories of a carefree and happy childhood. It merges with the image of 'swallow' which the poet use for herself. The woman – persona was a happy go lucky girl who love to roam about incomplete freedom like a bird. Then she was married and she found herself completely at the mercy of her tyrant husband. Her husband curtailed all her freedom. Her role become that of a domestic servant. She was taught.

***“..... to break saccharine into his tea and
To offer at the right moment the vitamins”***

The monstrous ego of the husband made the wife lose all her individuality. She becomes a neurotic.

For some readers, Das is a poet of love and sex. This view is based on the superficial reading Das poetry. She depicts the hollowness of her sexual relationship without any emotional involvement in it. There is a strong undercurrent of Pathos and melancholy running in some of her poem. The poignancy of her feelings is beautifully expressed in the lyric *My Grandmotherhouse* the poem is a powerful expression of the void (emptiness) within her. She says.

***“..... I who have lost my way and beg now at strangers doors to received love at least in
mall change.”***

Like frost poems, Das personal experience acquires universal colour says DavenderKohli.
“Courage and honesty are the strength of Kamala Das’s poetry and character.

Kamala’s achievements extend well beyond her poetry. She says, “I wanted to fill my life with as many experiences as I can manage to garner because I do not believe that one can get born again”. True to her word, Kamala Das has dabbled in painting, fiction and even politics. Though she failed to win a place in Parliament in 1984, she has been much more successful of late as a syndicated columnist. She has moved always from poetry because she claims that “Poetry does not sell in this country (India)”, but fortunately her forthright columns do. Kamala’s columns sound off on everything from women’s issues and child care to politics. In December, 1999 Kamala Das converted to Islam, creating a furore in the press. Less than a year later, Kamala Surayya announced her plans to register her political poetry “LokSeva”.

KamlaDas’s literary works.

The poetry of Kamala Das calls for special consideration because of its unique place not only among the Modern but even in Indian poetry in English by women as a whole. Kamala Das embodies the most significant stage of the development of Indian feminine poetic sensibility not yet reached by her younger contemporaries. Her poetry voices to the full not only the existential pressures generated during the modern Indian women’s journey from tradition to modernity, but even the Indian women poet’s sense of commitment to reality.

Her love of poetry began at an early age through the influence of her great uncle, Nalapat Narayan Menon, a prominent writer. Kamala remembers watching him “work from morning till night” and thinking that he had “a blissful life”. She was also deeply affected by the poetry of her mother, NalapatBalamaniAmmamma and the sacred writing kept by the matriarchal community at Nayars (India world).

The recent poems of Kamala Das show a development in her attitude to love. In *Summer in Calcutta* and *The Descendants*, the overwhelming scenes of defeat and frustration leads to the persistent desire for death. The sea seems to invite her towards itself, as in: “Come in Come in, what do you lose by dying, and/Besides, your losses are my gains.”

But, in the later poems, the maturity of approach is revealed through the psyche’s willingness to learn the lessons of experience. The frustrated beloved at last realizes the need for adjustment. She reconciles herself with the role of a house wife, as in: “Into the hospital/She opened wide her delirious eyes and/said: Please let me go/I smell the Tur Dal burning” There is even a hesitating re-assessment of her relationship with the husband, as in: “Perhaps I lost my way, perhaps/I went astray.” How would a blind wife trace her lost Husband, how would a deaf wife hear her husband call- in the light of the experience with different lovers. Kamala Das’s search for ideal love and the resultant disappointment seem to involve the psychological phenomenon of the *animus*“ struggling to project the masculine imprint as interpreted by Jung. The attempt to seek in every lover the perfection of masculine being is destined to end in failure because of the impossibility of realizing the ideal of human form. The poet reveals this

awareness in: "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." The feminine psyche is awakened to the true significance of the painful love affairs as being progressive steps towards the final realization of its relationship with God, as in: Any stone can make "An idol. Loving this one, I/Seek but another way to know/Him who has no more a body /to offer, and whose blue face is/A phantom- lotus son the water of my dreams." The poet's search for ideal love often takes the form of Radha's yearning for Krishna in some of the poems.

Kamala Das's world of imagery seems to be derived in particulars from the fields of nature, corporeal life, city life and domestic life. The image of „Sun“ is an integral part of her love experience while the birds like bats, herons, swallows and crows project different shades of her subjective response. The image of sea is limited to the scene background in the first volume, but is transformed into a meaningful symbol of the experience of frustration in the second volume. The particular recurrent image of the roots in the first volume probably marks the poet's sense of rootlessness because of the disappointment with the husband. The corporeal imagery enables her to explore the theme of love as a physical experience. The street is a major image associate with her residence in the cities. It provides her with a means of contact between the inner and the outer world. The imagery involving the insignificant details from domestic life stresses in contrast, the psyche's need for significance as a beloved.

The early poetry of Kamala Das suffers from certain weakness of technique, some of which continue even in her mature poetry. The device of repetition of words, for instance, in the first volume suggest the young poet's lack of confidence in the verbal medium. Notwithstanding the mature control of the device in the subsequent volumes, it continues in the form of the repetitions of sentence patterns. The excessive use of dots weakness Kamala Das's poetic expression in the early stage. The dots are generally used to suggest either a meditative pause, or the beginning of the next stage of thematic development, or the incompleteness of the experience communicated, or the end of the stanzaic unit. One of the distinct signs of the poet's mastery of the verbal medium is her control over the use of dots in the later poetry. The overflows and pauses emerge as one of the peculiarities of her technique. The lines pause and overflow at times even without grammatical or stylistic propriety. For instance, there is the most awkward overflow from the article to its noun. The pause also comes practically anywhere in the line and for as many times as the emotion demands. In spite of her few experiments in prose-poem; she prefers the traditional lyrical pattern to experimental structures.

Some of Kamala Das's poems seem to echo certain American and English poets although she is not directly influenced by any of them. For instance, the crucial word "striptease" in her important confession, " I must let my mind striptease" minds of its use by Sylvia Plath in the similar context in : "They unwrap me hand and foot/The big strip tease/Nevertheless, I am the same,/Identical woman."

Conclusion

Her statement about how “I watched and I watched the cart in “Visitors to the city” echoes Wordsworth’s reference to how “I gazed and gazed” from his poem, “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud.” The verb “incarnadine” from the crucial speech of Shakespeare’s Macbeth finds its way in „The Fear of the Year“ where Kamala Das speaks of the fear that “Thrusts its paws to incarnadine /the virgin whiteness.” And also in “The Inheritance” when she refers ironically to the incarnadined glory” of the city. The frankly honest tone of Kamala Das’s poetry has encouraged critics like DevindraKohli, Sivaramkrishna, Eunice de Souza, K. AyyappaPaniker and E.V. Ramakrishna to describe her as a confession poet. But, it should be noted that there is a romantic but deliberate vagueness in her poems about the men with whom she shares the experience. Her poetry embodies the quest for the archetypal experience of love as does Shelley’s in his own way. In a sense, it symbolizes in miniature the elemental quest of a woman - a deeply sexual being - for a man. However, in her vital effect to come to terms with the man - woman relationship in its full complexity, Kamala Das has modernized the Indian poetic psyche. The poetry written by her so far is meaningful enough to make her one of the leading Indian poets in English along with Nissim Ezekiel and A.K. Ramanujan.

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