



Woman Perspective in the Selected Poems of Kamala Das

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Abstract:

Among the new Twentieth Century Indian Poets, Kamala Das is one of the audacious poets who call her a voice of women and protests against patriarchal society and its norms. Being a confessional poem like Silvia Plath, she always referred herself an icon for feminine in India. A woman seeking for true love from her near and dear ones, especially from her husband, reflection of yearning for love and affections and sensibility of women is found in her poems. This research paper is an attempt to find woman perspectives in her selected poem. Her poems 'My Grand Mother's House, An Introduction, The Dance of Eunuchs, The Old Playhouse, and The Sunshine Cat, she has pretend the dominant patriarchal society where women have no opportunities of preferences or choice. She even resembles herself with the transgenders who make themselves beautiful but are ignored. A symbol of playing with a doll in Grand Mother House and Playhouse shows mentality of patriarchal society towards the women. Her nostalgia and desire for home are clearly seen in the poem My Grandmother's House. Thus, through these selected poems of her, Kamala Das appears to have struggled for the identity of women in patriarchal society.

Key Words: *Confessional tone, Patriarchal society, Loss of identity, Voice of women, Equal rights.*

I speak in three languages, Write in two, and Dream in One!!!

The lines written above are not by any other but by Kerala Sahitya Academy Award Winner, Kamala Das. Being entitled as 'The Mother of Modern Indian English Poetry' by 'The Times' in 2009, she has represented the woman in her poetry to her voice against men centered practices in the society. Kamala Das is the most distinguished of all the Indo-Anglian poets and she has certainly made a name for herself by the virtue of her craftsmanship as much as by the novelty or innovative quality of her treatment of her themes. She equals herself with Nissim Ezekiel on the ground of introspection and self-analysis. Being a confessional poetess, Kamala Das has always represented her feelings and notions of life through her poetry. On this ground of feeling and expression of secret thoughts, she resembles herself with Robert Lowell, the American poet. Orthodox Indians find it special and difficult to accept when Kamala Das talks about her marriage, her failure, and her extra marital sexual relationship with a candor in her poem.



The voices that we readers have experienced earlier were in soothing, imitating, and pleasant musical style by Sarojini Naidu and Toru Datt. But the voice of Kamala Das is a bit different as she looks assertive as that of a man. Kamala came in an age when all around the world mean in US and other nations; there existed an air of confessional poetry. Consequently, she could not keep herself away from the effect of such genre of confession. Being a confessional poet, like other poets, she expressed her all private experiences to public through her writing. That is her private experiences expressed in her poem are in an autobiographic manner. Professor Binod Misra in his series of lectures addresses that these private experiences of Kamala Das allow readers to understand the feeling of women's plight in a typical society of orthodox.

....you cannot believe darling
Can you, that I live in such a
house and Was proud, and
love.....and I Who have lost My
way and beg now at
strangers' door to Receive
love, at least in my
Change?

(My Grand Mother's House)

The above lines of her poem, she is expressing her fears, angers, angst feelings and all and also states she is very harsh against the patriarchal world order. According to her a bias world of men oriented, woman is a property to exploit as she has no authentic role even in marital life. For her marriage institution in this society plays a role of imposing men on women as they have no opportunity of preferences. For many people, Kamala Das is a rebellion as she evokes herself and shares voice of her own. She was beyond the contemporary writers of her time as they found busy in presenting a materialistic world like stone, clay, and other geophysical elements. That is why Kamala Das wrote that 'I even could not escape from predicament even for a moment.'

The present research paper stress lights on the feminine sensibility evident in the writing of Kamala Das. There is a reflection of her experiences or what we call it as legacy of her own by sharing her bitter experiences that she gathered from the men-oriented society of India. The present research article also aims to articulate the subjectivity of



women in the patriarchal Indian society. Being a confessional poet, she not only articulated the dark sides of her life but also shared her experiences of love, passion, and fascination towards body. Through her confessional words she wants to express the eternity of woman and her desires being withdrawal in so called men-oriented society.

Das' poem, 'An Introduction', from her collection, Summer in Calcutta' (1965), reveals her attitude towards men and women in the society. She talks about a woman who is in search of self-discovery, self-exploration in a patriarchal society. Her poem 'An Introduction' goes in an autobiographical form; sharing her personal life and its experiences as well as her addressing issues of the society, especially with women. The theme of this poem is quest for identity, equal rights, feminism, and freedom and marriage society. Poem finds no rhyme scheme in proper order but introduction of 'I' says about her and that is why she writes.....

Don't write in English, they said, English is
Not your mother-tongue, Why not leave
Me alone critics, friends, visiting cousins,
Every one of you? Why not let me speak in
Any language I like?

The above initial lines of her poem, 'An Introduction', are sufficient to mirror the jealous nature of her own people who never accept her endure skills of language. Being a feminine writer, writing in English, is not heartedly accepted but is suggested by her men that the language she preferred is a Colonists and should avoid it. Being a human being she speaks in a loud sound that why not a woman should be considered to be human and how you people dare to consider woman as secondary gender on this planet. Therefore, the language I speak and language I spoke offers me a path to grow. The background of feminine is also seen in one of her poems called, 'The Dance of the Eunuchs.' There is an ample scope for representing woman of the society and Kamala Das, a voice of woman embarking the treatment given to women.

...It was hot, so hot, before the eunuchs came
To dance, wide skirts going round and round, cymbals
Richly clashing, and anklets jingling, jingling
Jingling.....



The lines of this poem are symbolic one and narrated in confused manner as it reveals tendencies of woman in a patriarchal society. Being a victim of the patriarchal society, she talks about the dance of the transgender. According to her transgenders are also victim of this society and its norms, alienate them from being treated as human being of the society. Being a woman, Kamala Das compares herself with eunuchs. As eunuchs, transgenders, are looked down by the people in the society, like that she is also looked down by the patriarchal society. She is struggling member of the society who pays attention on her looking and her beauty, but is neglected. Therefore, eternally she joyless as transgenders uses to appear like a beautiful woman and dance continuously; are looked down every time.

In her poem, 'The Old Playhouse', Kamala Das has used deliberate imagery to show her martial life and thirst for love and objectification from her dear life partner. The word 'sparrow' used in her poem stands for her, being captured by a cruel and heartless captor (husband), who denies her identity and her existence. She hopelessly hopes for emotional attachments from her husband which were never to come in true in patriarchal society. Through this poem, Kamala Das wants predict the martial life of a woman who has to compromise with patriarchal society for the sake of her identity. The initial word 'you' in this poem deliberate play upon either on her husband or any other person who keeps woman for nothing.

You called me wife.

I was taught to brake saccharine into your tea and

To offer at the right moment the vitamins.

.....I lost my will and reason, to all your

Question I mumbled.....

'Playhouse' used in the title of the poem itself stands for the role of a girl in the house and house for children to play. Doll in the womb of a girl symbolizes that she is born to nurture her young and serve her husband by doing household things. There is a function of traditional role playing of gender in the house where girls have to play with dolls and boys have to play with cars and guns. This maintains hegemony of man over woman and resembles tradition patriarchal society.

They did this to her, the men who know her, the

She loved, who loved her not enough, being selfish



And a coward, the husband who neither loved nor
Used her, but was ruthless watcher.....

(The Sunshine Cat by Kamala Das)

‘The Sunshine Cat,’ a poem of Kamala Das reflects misery of woman and according to Kamala Das, woman never wants being submissive throughout her life, nor does she wants to be considered having a feline quality. The metaphoric lines of the poem by her shows need of love and sympathy as well as care from her husband. She is aggressive when she finds no concern from her husband and calls him a coward too. For Kamala Das life without love is useless for a woman.

It can be concluded on the ground of the selected lines from the selected poems of Kamala Das that being a confessional poet, she transcribes her confession. Her confessions are for her dissatisfaction, for thirst of love and understanding. Therefore, she should not be considered as single voice of women’s problems, but she is to be considered as iconoclast, as she wants to break the beliefs in the patriarchal society. Through her poems, she represents the feminism and attempts to voice for freedom of choice.

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