

Kamala Das As a Feminist Voice

Capt. Prof. KAUSAR KHAN,

HoD, Department of English

Anwarul Uloom College, Hyderabad, Telangana, India.

Abstract

In the contemporary Indian literary scenario, Kamala Das occupies a prominent position as a writer of talent and artistry. As a writer in English, she has attracted international attention by virtue of her bold, uninhibited articulation of feminine urges along with other women writers like Gauri Deshpande, Mamata Kalia and others. Like other feminist Kamala Das also knows that unless women themselves refuse to be victims, unless they can develop faith in their own powers, they shall continue to be exploited by men, to be relegated to the margins.

In the contemporary literature, written by women, the feminine voice revolves largely round claim for perfect freedom in personal matters chiefly in relation to love and sex. The old customs yielding to all - pervading spirit of modernism which has crystallised predominantly in the elimination of the status quo in every conceivable walk of life. It appears perfectly natural that Indian women elevate their voice against the established order and to try to affirm their distinct identity breaking the traditional taboos as to love and sex which is the outcome of male dominated society.

The feminine psychology and her needs according to her cannot be met by any man. He has got no time to sit with her and talk about the supposed anger, anguish and ambitions of a woman – Her life is more leisurely and she needs understanding and love; affections and care. It is this psychology of the feminine mind which gets its focus in her poems. For a woman, love is the essence of her. The early flirtations, the teenage turbulence, the lust and sexual needs of the young woman, her love and affection for the children, the earning for the suffering and concern for the unlucky, these are all nothing but the external expressions of her love. A woman craves for love and this love is not one-sided. She longs to receive love and to give love.

Key Words: Contemporary Feminist Emotional, Conscious Sensibility, creative Subjugation, Bondage Shackles, Perturbed, Significance.

Introduction:

Mrs Das presents a feminist movement hegemony from the inner care of her feminine consciousness. Mrs. Das's personality has its irrelaxable anchors in sexual love and when it is refused she feels her life is meaningless, barren and waste land. She bursts out in the poem "The Suicide":

"O Sea, I am fed up,

I want to be simple,

I want to be loved

If love is not to be had

I want to be dead"

In the poem "*Jasiurya*" Das's affect continue to search the reality through life, nature and herself. Her inquisition for reality ends pleasantly of the birth of Jaisurya. She has delineated her feminist voice through sex imagery. Her search for identity is sex oriented. In the context of feminist voice Mrs.Das has presented Indian English poetry a new discourse: the discourse of woman's corporal language from the point of view of woman. To communicate the vision of truth she uses words boldly, speaking in a manner in which people have not spoken before.

The poem '*Summer in Calcutta*' celebrates the writer's mirthful share in life, but what when read between the lines, the poem records the poetess's awareness about the male-chauvism over women. Mrs.Das has never found fulfillment in her emotional life.

Feminism, is like a new missile often fired at any modern woman writer. The evolution as the term itself is interesting. In western countries like America and England where woman enjoy a lot of freedom and social status went to the extreme extent of even abusing man, just for fun and publicity that he afforded to them. Its echoes were heard mildly in India. The conditions in India are quite contradictory and confusing. Women are placed on a pedestal and worshipped on the one hand and treated badly and enslaved on the other. Indian women were happy to live in the four walls of the house, looking after the kitchen and the children.

Conditions were not better in Europe in the last century. The Industrial Revolution, brought about a change in Europe, while the Indian concept remained the same. In the nineteenth century woman started working in Europe making themselves less dependent on men. As a result woman started asserting their position and fighting for their rights. This movement is termed as “feminism”. Feminism did not get a lot importance in India. But still, its effects are seen in some of the films and writings. It is not that there are no problems for women in India. Infact, women suffer a lot, especially, in the rural areas at the hands of the men. But still women fight within a certain limits only in India.

Kamala Das, is generally seen in the forefront of such writers who fought for the rights of women. It is in the writings of Kamala Das that the Indian English poetry acquired for itself a real substantiality that matches equally with the creative contribution of the Western Confessionalists like Sylvia plath and Anne Sexton of America. Of all the women poets of the present India, Das projects herself as a fervent feminist voice always exacting for a dignified place of honour, a respect for the naturalistic freedoms and choices.

Kamala Das’s writings especially her poetry embodies agonies of women emerging from that state of subjugation and bondage, and seeking to establish their identity and the self. It is not an easy process because it involves to adopt a defiant attitude and to probe the bruised self that expressed anger and bewildered sense of rootlessness. This is best expressed through felt emotions in an intensely personalised idiom. It is easy enough to see in such a stance a dislocated mind suffering the nightmares of a shut-in life devastated and laid bare by a hyper-sexed, self-willed and schizophrenic woman. This is precisely what prevailing critical attitude to her poems highlights, which is not only lamentably lop-sided, but inlucative of an alarmingly impoverished angle of critical outlook in India English criticism. In a vein which issues from this dominant critical approach, her poems stands as a feminist voice and are seen as needs love, consideration and sympathy and desires a loving husband, warmth and home.

Such a interpretation come from a reluctance to give up the traditional mental attitude, for what is more heart warming than the return of the defiant woman to the conventional age-old mould of the categorizers. It misses the basic point about her poetry; it is essentially a poetry of protest, of defiance and of emphatic assertion, all other moods ranging from week feminine sense

of helplessness and submission, to a restless search for happiness and shelter are different expressions of this basic Promethean spirit which is eager to break the rusted shackles and have its voice heard.

Whether she explores her sexual experiences and encounters or the seamy side of public life, cities, dwellings, and streets – there can always be noted the defiant, ironical tone in her poetry. No other Indian English poet employed irony to such devastating effect before Kamala Das – it is caustic, it is Virgilian, it is profoundly demolishing. It evokes both pity and anger, sympathy and ire.

Conclusion:

Thus, Kamala Das is a contemporary Indian writer quite conscious of her artistic design and purpose as well as of her responsibility towards her vision. Here is undoubtedly a feminist voice articulating the hopes and oppressions, the concerns and tensions, of woman kind. Explicitly, she writes about love, sex and marriage – all well within her experience and awareness. Her poetic voice imbued with a feminine cum feminist sensibility is typically her own and it cannot be confused with anyone else's

With Kamala Das it is essentially a matter of attaining our critical vision to “the hidden vistas” of her inner world which has so much to offer to our perturbed, questioning minds. For her poetry is not “a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality. “As she says in *My Story* “A poet's raw material is not clay of stone: it is her personality. Only, Kamala Das's inner world has not remained her personal demesne, it has acquired profound symbolic significance for all bruised and battered womankind.

References:

1. Kamala Das. My story, Sterling Publications, New Delhi 1967.
2. Kohli, Suresh. "The Poetic Craft of Kamala Das" Thought 1968.
3. Kohli Suresh. Feminine Sensibility at work: A study of some Indo English Women Poets." Indian and Foreign Review 1971.
4. Kannan, Lakshmi. "Feminine and Androgynous Voices: Contemporary English Verse By Indian Women in the Journal of Indian Writing in English, 1979.
5. Daruwalla, Keki N. "Kamala Das" in Two Decades of Indian Poetry 1960-1980, Vikas Publishing House, Pvt. Ltd. Ghaziabad, 1980.
6. Das, Bijay Kumar, "The Poetry of Kamala Das" in Modern Indo – English Poetry. Prakash Book Depot, Bareilly, 1982.
7. Elaine Showalter. Towards a Feminist Poetics, (New Feminist Criticism, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985).
8. Simon de Beauvoir. The Second Sex, 1949 rpt London" Picador, 1988)
9. Juliet Michele, "Feminism, Narrative and Psychoanalysis," reprinted in Modern Criticism and Theory, ed: David Lodge (London and New York: London, 1988).
10. Gail Chester and Sigrid Nielson. In Other Worlds: Writing as a Feminist. London: Hutchinson, 1989.
11. Venugopal, C.V. 'Kamala Das – The Seeker After Truth' in Living Indian English Poets, ed. Madhusudan Prasad (Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1989.
12. Dwivedi. A.N. "Kamala Das As a Poetic Artist" Indian Writing in English" Part I, Poetry Amar Prakashan, Delhi 1991.
13. Iqbal Kaur. "Sexual Politics and Kamala Das" in Indian Women Novelists (ed.) R.K. Dhawan Delhi, 1991.