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## **POTRAYAL OF LOVE IN THE WRITINGS OF KAMLA DAS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Kamala Das is one of the most outstanding poets emerging out of the quintessential quartet of pioneers of Indian English poetry post-Independence. Bold, brisk, blazing, and lurid portrayal of love, sex and self by her shook the very foundation of stereotyped male-dominated literary world. She is pre-dominantly a poet of love and sex. She considers love's last form as divine and it coalesces the lovers inseparably united. Love means a deep and enduring emotional regard, usually for another person. The theme of love has been a recurrent one in the history of literature. Love is an interesting subject in literature because love unlike other themes, has many twists and turns and many different ending. In Kamala Das's poetry also love is depicted through various aspects. This research is based on the various aspects of love depicted by Kamala Das in her poetry. Her poetry is thus all herself, about her intensely felt desire for love and her failure to maintain a sound married life.

**Keywords:** - Love, Kamla das, Sex, Poetry, Death.

### **I. 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.



With the receding of the romantic tradition, the second wave of Indian poetry in English emerged just around the beginning of post-Independence era. R. Parthasarathy's Ten Twentieth-century Indian Poets publicized the works of the 'academic' poets, among whom the most audacious — particularly in her protests against patriarchy and embracing of matrilineal culture with a romantic fervor, the exploration of female sexuality and the sexual desires of women,

(1) is Kamala Das. Kamala Das, also known as Madhavikutty in her mother-tongue, Malayalam, is a trail blazer in the Indian English Poetry. Kamala Das has served the Indian English literature immensely.

Her most remarkable achievement is writing an Indian English. Often her vocabulary, idioms, choice of words and some syntactical construction are part of what has been termed the Indianization of English. This is an accomplishment. It is important in the development of the national literature that writers free themselves from the linguistics standard of their colonizers and create a literature based on local speech.

## **II. EVOLUTION OF THEMES IN POETRY OF KAMALA DAS**

In Kamala Das's volumes of verse, there are a number of poems that breathe an air of love, amorousness, and sexuality. But these should not lead one to believe that she has been pleading all along for promiscuity and adultery.

They rather articulate her strong desire to get liberated from the clutches of a male-dominated society and pass a happy, healthy life of peace and rest. The woman-persona in her asserts an „indomitable will“ and „the spirit of revenge“ (to use Milton's popular phrases), and gives a clarion-call to the weaker sex to rise in revolt against all kinds of repression and tyranny being perpetrated on it. Kamala as a poet is never tired of speaking aloud for womankind as a whole, and several of her poems should be read in this light. Beyond a shadow of doubt, love/sex, occupies a prominent place in her poetry and emerges as one of its dominant themes.

Kamala Das has also collaborated with Pritish Nandy in *Tonight, This Savage Rite* (1979), a collection of their love poems. Her poetry deals with the subject of love and emotional discontentment in an empty married life. Her image in public as feminine yet forthright, unconventional yet honest, ebullient yet tragic, impetuous yet insecure;

*I Studied All Men,” “What Women Expect Out of Marriage and What They Get,” “ Why Not More Than One Husband?” and “I Have Lived Beautifully”.*

India is a unity in diversity and its literature also gives the same fragrance. Modern Indian English poetry emerged at the end of the Second World War after the end of colonialism. It is one of the many 'new literatures' which began at that time. It is also a fact that modern Indian poetry in English has been neglected by the most of the critics, foreign readers and intellectuals as compare to the creative writings of Africa and the Caribbean. The reason is that it has no obvious and direct relationship to the cultural movements which led to national independence.



### **III. SOCIAL POEMS**

In "Toys" Kamala Das is critical of those who sow the seeds of disharmony and tension in the society. "Delhi 1984" deals the terrorist violence unleashed on the innocent Sikhs in the wake of Indira Gandhi's assassination. "Smoke in Colombo" is the denunciation of the genocide of Tamils committed by the dominant non-Tamils in Sri Lanka. "The Dalit Panther" highlights the atrocities committed by the police on a Dalit youth. "If Death is your Wish" is the bold condemnation of those who settle their accounts by indulging in acts of violence to destabilize society. In "Daughter of the Century" is the condemnation of the forces of hatred.

### **IV. POEMS OF DEATH AND DECAY**

"Women's Shuttles" reveals the agony of the poetess who had to undertake a number of trips behind a dare one's bier. "Life's Obscure Parallel is Death". In "Death is So Mediocre" the poetess visualizes her prelude to death.

"I Shall Not Forget" shows the poetess's direct confrontation with death at the time of her father's death. It was this encounter with death that always haunted her mind. In "Smudged Mirrors", the poetess bemoans her deteriorating health and approaching old age. "The Intensive Cardiac Care Unit" presents death-like atmosphere, patient waiting for execution and half-grown nightmares

### **V. 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.

## **VI. DANCE OF THE EUNUCHS**

Is one of the most remarkable poems of Kamala Das. The poet vividly conjures up the atmosphere of a hot, tortured, corrupt, sterile and barren world through vivid symbols and images. The dance of the eunuchs whose joyless life reflects the poet's fractured personality is a noticeable piece of autobiographical poetry. Kamala Das has vividly visualized the world of —vacant ecstasy and sterility through numerous functional images and symbols in her poetry. In fact Eunuchs try to eke out a livelihood by dancing. Their dancing is mechanical and painful. The conditions and the climate are forbidding. The spectators are merciless. Even God seems to add their woes. The eunuchs' voices are harsh and their songs are full of melancholy.

The themes of the songs are those of lovers dying and children left unborn. Some beat their drums while others beat their flat breasts and wept. The joy on their faces is only a mask as they writhe in pain and



their faces are really vacant. The atmosphere of heat and sterility is, first of all, expressed through —fiery gulmohur| and —the jasmines in, their hair| could not provide them with a soothing effect. The image of —Their sour breasts| again suggests their sterility and barrenness because they belong to neither sex. They are destined to remain unfulfilled. In fact their personality reflects the psychological outburst of the poet. It can be examined on the lines of abjection theory developed by Julia Kristeva —The abject is that which is rejected by social reason- the communal consensus that underpins a social order| (6). —The abject exists accordingly somewhere between the concept of an object and the concept of the subject representing taboo elements of the self barely separated off in a liminal space|(7) According to Julia Kristeva- —The abject is situated outside the symbolic order, being forced to face it is an inherently traumatic experience, as with the repulsion presented by confrontation with filth, waste or a corpse- an object which is violently cast out of the cultural world, having once been a subject” Similarly the highly suggestive images of: ..... a meager rain that smelt of dust in

Attics and the urine of lizards and mice....|

highlight the depressed and dejected mental state of Kamala Das. According to Kristeva’s theory of abjection, fear is the dominant/operative word. Making a connection between language and phobia, Kristeva claims that —phobia does not disappear but slides beneath language| and —any practice of speech, in as much as it involves writing, is a language of fear| (9). Similarly the heightened sensibilities of the poet through the picturisation of the external factors forge the image of the psychological state of the poet herself.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, we may assert that Kamala Das’ 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.



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