EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF LIFE SAFETY AND STABILITY (EJLSS)
ISSN2660-9630
www.ejlss.indexedresearch.org Volume 48, -2025 ||



Kamala Das: A Balanced Voice for Man – Woman Relationship

Sheikh Fakharuddin Ali Ahmed
Assistant Professor, Mahatma Gandhi College, Chalantapara

Abstract: *Kamala Das is one of the significant writers of Indian English literature. Her writings represent the Indian women and speak about their gendered bias experienced at each and every step of life. She looked in to her self, and wrote poems, novels as well as essays reflect the man-woman relationship and specially woman's quest for identity and true love.*

Das's first collection Summer in Calcutta promised the rise of the revolutionary woman poet in India. In her writings reflected woman's longing for love and her restrictions in the society. Her poems like An Introduction, The Descendents, Alphabet of Lust and Only Soul Knows How to Sing are open voices of restricted woman in an orthodox society. Her autobiography My Story created controversy for its frank and bold discussion of her search for love inside and outside marriage. She writes significantly of the traditional conservative society in which she lives. Her's is a vigorous and poignant feminism confessional poetry, in which the underlying theme is the exploration of the man-woman relationship. This style was also subsequently taken up by other women poets such as Suniti Namjoshi, Chitra Narendran and Gouri Despande. Frank and explicit expression on matters of sexuality Kamala Das's writings focused on love betrayal and the resultant agony that often unsettled the orthodox readers. As a confessional poet Kamala Das got recognition by dedicating herself with her creation and the patriotic fervor as a fearless writer. She fought the battle against the oppression and subjugation by the male to the female not being a severe feminist.

Date of Submission: 20-12-2024 ***Date of Acceptance: 20-01-2025***

INTRODUCTION:

Kamala Das, frank, bold and controversial figure on life and literature has been a unique literary phenomenon in India. She made enormous contribution to the growth of Indian poetry in English in particular and for the Indian literature in general. The history of Indian-English poetry remained mainly the story of male voice, male imagination and male strategies. But Kamala Das is one of the woman poet writing in English who in her poems truly represents the Indian woman and speaks about their gendered bias experience at each and every steps of life. She merits a place among the best women poets of the post-colonial period.

20th century women's writings witnessed as a powerful medium of modernism and feminist statement. The last two decades have showed phenomenal success in feminist writings in English literature. Like Kamala Das other authors namely, Anita Desai, Suniti Namjoshi, Kamala Markandaya and Sashi Deshpande have chosen the problems and issues faced by women in the male dominated world as the main theme of their works.

Kamala Das's writings reflect that poetry meant studying life in an objective and realistic way. Poet Das for her frank and explicit expression on matters of sexuality and her writings focused on love, betrayal and the resultant agony that after unsettled the orthodox readers. As a confessional poet Kamala Das got recognition by dedicating herself with her creation and the patriotic fervour as a fearless writer. She faught the battle against the oppression and subjugation by the male to the female not being anti-masculine and also not being a severe feminist.

The creative works of Kamala Das dealt mainly the themes like sex, love, freaks, criticism, and opposition etc. But sex and love occupy the central position in her progressive works. Her poems, novels, as well as essays reflect the genuineness of the heart in revealing the relationship of male and female. As the both sex are the inalienable component of the human beings she raised her voice against the gender discrimination in the society for the proper development of the mankind. On one hand, she seeks emotional and physical needs from a male partner, on the other she yearns for a kind of love which is a spiritual and seeks that love through a sexual relationship. In search of self, Kamala Das wants liberation from the chain of traditional male dominated social system.

Writings of Kamala Das are replete with dualism in which soul is contrasted to body, she seems to imagine over coming this dualism only through death, especially drown in the sea, water beings associated in her mind and all encompassing, universal calm, a formless in contract to the conscious mind and body of the anxious individual and through the liberation of soul from the body. As like as Sylvia Plath, Kamala Das too wants to get liberation through death.

O sea, I am fed up

I want to be simple

I want to be loved

And

If love is not be had

I want to be dead.

We must look in to her poetry in the light of her feminine consciousness which she acquires from the hostile circumstances of her childhood periods. Being a poet now she likes to indulge in self awareness, self exposure and self introspection in order to define herself poetically. The aim of the poet is not self exploration but self discovery and self -examination. She started self- exploration in order to search her lost identity as a woman and then as a poet.

Das finds herself exploited and cheated by the civilization of which she remains a part. Her community, family and civilization expect her to perform the role of temptress of the goddess or daughter, wife, and the mother. But she has no respect for the culture which has made use of her. So she explores herself and tries to demonstrate her real self and identity.

On the way of searching identity, Kamala Das persistently paints the man-woman relationship in most of her works specially the relationship between wife and husband, father and daughter which are expressed from a particular view point of a woman who despite of being a doll in the hands of husband or father, wants a liberation from the chain of traditional male dominated society. Das raised her voice against the gender discrimination in the society for the proper development of the mankind.

As a post colonial woman poet Mrs. Das might be influenced by the western movement for the feminist liberation and her rebellion against gender discrimination in the poems may be traced out as a restless mouthpiece of the suppressed femininity in the Indian context. Sometimes it is said that eroticism and obscenity have weakened her art. She is considered to be a poet of decadence, a

victim of the inadequacies of life and told that such elements looses the controls over her art. Her most notable strength lies in confronting the reality of her experience which in her poems become symptomatic of the general suffering of countless women. What Sylvia Plath, Judith Wright, Margaret Atwood, Anne Sexton, Phyllics Webb, Margaret Avison and Susan Griffins are doing in British, American, Canadian and Australian poetry Kamala Das introduced in Indian English poetry.

Kamala Das has already been awarded a permanent place foralso in the world as well. She is after all a woman with a limited range of experience of life, but she makes the best use of the crippling situation around. Here another woman writer, Jane Austen's mention worthy who is so well-known for her 'Two Inches of Ivory'. Like Austen Kamala Das also moves within her limited range with grace and skill, and nothing borrowed from another source. In Kamala Das we find an inner urge to get liberated in a conventional and feminine tradition. Getting frustrated with life, especially in the married life, she starts to search her own identity, her own self so as to get liberated from chain bound male dominated social set up.

As a third world woman poet Kamala Das might be influenced by the western movement for the feminist liberation and her rebellion against gender discrimination in the poem may be traced out as a restless mouthpiece of the suppressed feminity in the Indian context. Sometimes it is said that eroticism and obscenity have weakened her art. She is considered to be a poet of decadence, a victim of the inadequacies of life and told that such elements loose the control over her art.

No doubt Kamala Das has already created a permanent place for herself in contemporary Indo-English poetry, not only in India but in the west as well. She is after all, a woman with a narrow range of Experience in life, but she makes the best use of the crippling situations around. In this context she reminds us of.

Another woman writer, Jane Austen who is so well-known for her, “Tow Inches of Ivory.” Like Austen, Kamala Das also moves within her limited range with grace and skill, and nothing borrowed from another source, In Kamala Das we find an inner urge to get liberated in a conventional and feminine tradition. Getting frustrated with life, especially in the married life, she starts to search her own identity; her own self so as to get liberated from chain bound male dominated social set up.

Conclusion:

Kamala Das is resound as a bilingual author of poetry and fiction. But in temperament, she was primarily a poet of reality who unbarred her soul and self in poetry. She started writing poems at an early age, voicing her suppressed feelings. As a girl of six, she wrote sad poems of headless dolls, which marked the beginning of her tragic vision. “It was the first gesture of her art of evoking sympathy, intimacy and interest through sorrow and irony. After becoming a writer and a grown-up adult, she retained this prime sense of tragedy and pathos in all her writings.”

Though, In the history of Indian- Poetry, it has been mainly the story of male voice, male imagination and male strategies, in search of self, Kamala Das persistently paints the man-woman relationship in most of her works specially the relationship between wife and husband, father and daughter are expressed from a particular view point of a woman who despite of being a doll in the hands of husband or father, wants a liberation from the chain of traditional male dominated society. Das raised her voice against the gender discrimination in the society for the proper development of the mankind.

“Every middle class bed is a cross on which the woman is crucified-men

fall in lust, not love, women crash in real self destroying love,....”

Though this is considered that women fall in love to her counter-part, but men don't fall in true love to women, but only fall in lust, that is why the love of woman is self destroying, is not universally true. Sometimes opposite type of exchange in relation to love between man and woman can be found. For example, in "**Alphabet of Lust"** the novel by Kamala Das, 'Manashi', the protagonist was seduced by swadashivrao, a minister where Manashi was proved to be a victim of lust by Swadashivrao. On the other hand, Kamala Das's parents were miss-matched and the mother did not fall in love with her father as reflected in her "**My Story**." Kamala Das herself had to bear ill treatment from her husband in her family life and the mother-in-law also took part in increasing her suffering.

But here Kamala Das finds some good quality also in male characters in her novel "Alphabet of Lust." Because the main male character of the novel, Amal Mitra, a Govt. employee suffered a lot due to her wife, the protagonist Manashi's flirting nature and characterlessness who inquest of fame and ministry, offered her body to a minister at first and to the Prime-Minister for the next, thus she became a bitch. Though she understood her fault and returned at last to her husband, Amal accepted her by showing his passions as a good man.

However, Das showed herself to be a fiminine artist through a balanced life on man-woman relationship. She advocates for fifty-fifty partnership in between husband and wife. In her essay, "Enough of Pativrata" she suggested the woman to raise the voice boldly in the issues and matters in her life. According to her, husband and wife should obey each other's command when necessity arises.

We think the advice for fifty-fifty partnership and obeying of each other command in between husband and wife may create an example of balanced family life. A balanced family life may be the base of balanced social life which may contribute to build a prosperous national life in peace and tranquility where domination of a gender over another and the gender discrimination will be decreased.

REFERENCES:

1. A. N. Dwivedi, *Kamala Das and Her Poetry*. New Delhi, India: Atlantic Publishers, 2000.
2. K. D. Singh, *Feminism and Post Feminism*. New Delhi, India: Sarup & Sons, 2006.
3. P. K. Singh, *Major Indo-English Poets and Poetry*. Jaipur, India: Books Enclave, 2004.
4. R. Mittapalli, *Kamala Das: A Critical Spectrum*. New Delhi, India: Atlantic Publishers, 2001.