



Freedom Primary and Secondary Concern: A Study of Kamala Das

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ABSTRACT:

The primary concern are naturalistic acquirement of men whereas the Secondary concern emerge out of the emotional attachments to the man made traditional institutional and their connections. Needless to say the naturalistic acquirement is invariably superior to the man made institutional traditions. Man made institutional parameters invariably after and change in course of time, and these alterations and changes in themselves are likely to become understandable constraints in the later stage of life in the historical process. Therefore these, manmade connections very often require reformations and revisions in accordance with the immediate temporal demands. However, the response of a person to his surroundings is dependent on how strongly or less strongly he or she receives these conditions into his inner self and when the secondary concerns get overstretched beyond their necessity in operation by nature the response of the individual to them is most likely to be negative.

The words as female or feminine are associated with self or selfhood to suggest the biological and socio-cultural bindings and limitations that are imposed on women. The familial roles that a woman plays, and the secondary preference that she finds for herself in society, are basic reasons for her own lack of confidence or sense of incompleteness, concerning the self. She knows herself to be incomplete without those others who occupy the position prior to her. Therefore she thinks she must be incomplete without them. Her thinking, misguided by her knowledge through experience, leads to her mental preparation to suppress, surrender and sacrifice the self. In this sense, woman possess the female self the biological impositions and the feminine self the socio-cultural pressures in implications of womanhood. History and culture traditionally taught women to believe that masculine mind is prominent through intellectual aggressiveness and the feminine, through emotional submission.

KEY WORDS: Temporal, overstretched, impositions, intellectual

INTRODUCTION: Men are the colonizers, the women colonized. The colonized women feels suffocated under the female yoke, whether the oppressor is the Father or the husband. H.M Parshley argues that “since patriarchal times, women in general been forced to occupy a secondary place in the world in relation to men, a position comparable in many respects to that of

racial minorities in spite of the fact that women constitute numerically at least of half of the human race , and further that his secondary standing is not imposed of necessity by natural 'feminine' characteristics but rather by strong environmental forces of education and social tradition under the purposeful control of men”

Kamala Das's writings are an amalgam of the Western and the Indian modes of confessionalism. She not only highlights the inherent longings and weakness of her women, but she also elevates her experiences from the physical to an ethereal plane. While the confessional writings of John Berryman, Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton take on religious and psychological turn, Kamala Das' confessionalism appears to take on a sexual turn where sex is used as a means to depict the agonies of her body and spirit. In Kamala Das one sees the problems of an average Indian woman being confessed blatantly. She shatters the hitherto placid image of an average Indian woman. Her sensitive soul and probing mind have flatly refused to accept the stereotypes of women. In other words, the women is normally treated in a traditional conservative society as a chattel, commodity and as an object of mere sexual gratification. Kamala Das is uninhibited in placing the physical and the psychological longings on an equal scale.

Kamala Das's poetry is the poetry of protest against the conventions of society and against the restraints and restrictions which husband or society in general impose upon women imply not only her pursuit and her attainment of the freedom to act just as she likes but also her advocacy of the right of all women to enjoy such freedom. Her tone of resentment and indignation certainly shows her own sense of injustice against the social order but it also stresses the desirability and the need of the recognition of the claims and rights of Indian woman in general.

Kamala Das's autobiography "My Story" has been one of such assaults on the social – cultural standards of evaluation. She not only deconstructs the code of morality and feminine role-models but even goes to the extent of 'striptease' her own selfhood, to 'extrude' autobiography. Love and protest are two most important interrelated issues of the life she has lived and narrated in her story. As a protest, she has fallen in love again and again to breach the domestic suffocation and for love she has protested against all that obstructed her path, including the identity, the security and the religion.

Kamala Das marital life is based on incongruity. Kamala Das was married at an early age of fifteen to a bank official, insensitive to a young girl's longings. Kamala Das is bound to do the domestic duties in the family against her tender feelings and yearnings for emotional involvement. This sort of existence in her husband's home presents the miserable predicament of a woman-an instance of 'prey and predatory' image. Her husband's pride of his having had contacts with 'sluts and nymphomaniacs" creates a revolt in her heart against the very institution of arrange wedding. The male domination on feminine psyche can be diminished and dilapidated by woman when she lets herself participate in the world of nature and in the amelioration of her status independently.

In her marital incompatibility and violent eruptions of emotions, she explosively forced the sexist assumptions which were socially upon. Kamala emotional maladjustment with the husband, the lovers and the relatives made her attack the wasting and wasted moral system. She attacked the established practice of sexual politics in marital existence. A woman accustomed to the tendency of being in protection, shadow or support of man in the roles as father, husband, brother or son, needs the sense of security all through her life. She needs men since she is taught dependence as a way life in the family-from childhood to girlhood and then to womanhood. The very concept of womanhood is the product of patriarchal format and man-generated creed for

woman. This system changes her home from the fathers' to the husband's by way of marriage but it does not allow her the sense of independent existence. Moving from one person to another, she may suffer the feeling of uprootedness but she is expected to adjust and find her happiness in the happiness of man she depends on. The socio-cultural ethos creates the need for security and protection for woman and premises than in man. Kamala Das dared to shake off this stereotyped pattern and lived isolated and agonizing lives rather than the unwanted, unheeded life of hypocritical relationships.

Kamala Das was disappointed to realize that she was fettered, that she could not assert her right to freedom. Kamala Das felt trapped, imprisoned, caught up in a hostile world which offers hardly any options to a woman, but could not do anything about it. Realizing that for a woman, howsoever brave she may be, it is difficult to create a reality other than what the society has created for her. Subordination to man remains a woman's destiny. The society and family imposes a name and role on woman and she has to carry it. Kamala Das questions it. Why cannot she have own existence and personality? Now this name is the role that she has to live and she is weighed down by it.

Kamala Das questions the traditional role of woman as good wife, mother and householder. But she is not a woman liberator for after all questionings and probing she realizes that man's love is the last resort even though it may be crushing her own being and personality. It seems that after all wondering and freedom women has to come back to man's love and even his scorn.

The poem entitled "The Dance of Eunuchs" was published in Kamala Das's very first volume which appeared under the heading "Summer in Calcutta". The eunuchs, as we know, is incapable of performing the sexual act and, therefore of producing a child. In this poem, the eunuchs has been regarded as a symbol of unproductiveness. The eunuchs is here thus a metaphor for barrenness and, therefore, for the futility of love. Consequently this poem is an expression, in symbolic terms, of Kamala Das's feeling of frustration in love. Kamala Das seems here to be giving an outlet to her feeling of the futility of all her sexual experiences because all those experiences had failed to satisfy her emotional demands though they did satisfy, and in full measure, her sexual demands.

Das records her lurch and botchery, her despair and discomfiture in majority of her poems. In "Dance of the Eunuchs", the opening poem of Summer in Calcutta, provides a concrete hint to the identity crisis that her feminine and poetic self encounters, the crisis emerging from the sense of persecution and inadequacy. Kamala Das seems to have found an objective correlative in the eunuchs who represent a sheer contrast between the outwardly pretence of passion and joy, and the inwardly vacuity of emotion, love and passion. The sense of sterility and loss of sensation symbolized by the eunuchs is reflective of suppressed desire and unfulfilled love of a woman in the poetess. The warmth that the eunuchs exhibit is only ostentatious and highly ironic. They also represent an identity crisis as regards the gender role, even in the poetess.

Another poem "The Stone Age" brings forth her suffocated self under the domination of male. Kamala hardly ever perceives the tender feeling of love in what is called lovemaking. The husband is here depicted as an old fat spider weaving "webs of bewilderment" around her, and erecting stony walls of domesticity. The husband is a constant source of annoyance, an unwelcome intruder into the privacy of the wife's mind which is haunted by other man.

In the poem "The Sunshine cat" Kamala Das speaks of the injustice meted out to women where again the dominant motif is suffering. Kamala Das believes that the society is hostile to

women and that they are humiliated in all possible ways. The poem directly highlights the miseries of a forlorn woman. The men treated her very badly- the man she loved did not reciprocate her feelings and he was basically 'selfish' and 'coward', the husband, who neither 'loved' her nor 'used' her properly but who was a ruthless watcher of her (Kamala's) sexual act with other men. In the poem "The sunshine cat" – This kind of confession would certainly shock the prudes who regard Kamala Das as a shameless, brazen woman who speaks about her husband in disparaging terms and who makes no secret of her efforts to please the other man with whom she had been sleeping. But Kamala Das has written about her personal experience in this frank manner under the pressure of her own feelings and also because the poetess knows that there are many women in this country who are tyrannized over by their husband and who turn to other men for emotional as well as for sexual satisfaction. We should look at this poem as one of angry protest against male domination of women in this country; and we should therefore, praise Kamala Das for her boldness and daring manner indirectly advocating the rights of women.

"The Old Playhouse" describes that love aims at achieving an insight into one's own being, not into another's. Its essence lies in the realization of one's own self, and not in the loss of one's freedom.

You called me wife,

I was taught to break saccharine into your tea and

To offer at the right moment the vitamins. Cowering

Beneath your monstrous ego, I

Became a dwarf. I lost my will and reason to all your

Questions I mumbled incoherent replies.

"The Old Playhouse" is the poet's mind in which floating sensations, regrets and floating pieces of thought and memory are the actors which act their parts in the dark with all the lights shut out. The poem is the poet's protest against the domination of the male and the consequent dwarfing of the female. The woman is expected to play certain conventional roles, and her own wishes and aspirations are not taken into account. The intensity of the protest, conveyed in conversational idiom and rhythm, makes it symbolic of the protest of all womanhood against the male ego.

CONCLUSION: Kamala's soul rebels against the lack of genuine communication of emotional and spiritual bonding. The requirement, she realizes with shock, is to conform and to become domesticated- to cater to the master, children and kitchen and whenever necessary be on display as a showpiece. This kind of façade that she is expected to maintain for the benefit of others. At the same time, a woman cannot escape from her basic needs of love and security. Thus the feminine self is the combination of the need for the domestic security and the desire for independence. Such a predicament also leads her to rebel against establishments of all sorts the bonds of marriage, family and society. This is what Devindra Kohli calls the modern "Indian Women's Ambivalence" and term this conflict between passivity and rebellion against the male oriented universe, her poetry is in the final analysis an acknowledgement and celebration of the beauty and courage of being a woman"

Thus Kamala Das is a woman finds herself caged in her 'feminine' roles wherein she is expected to be submissive and accustomed to her secondary placement. This type of burden she carries on in her mind from childhood; unconsciously even in her writings she reflects herself secondary. Kamala Das's expression is largely dependent on the forces she reflects as the primary source of her feminine perceptions. Despite her westernized education, in Anglo-Indian schools and her own place as a careerist writer in English, Kamala Das could never escape the root-mentality of an Indian female negating herself. Kamala Das is bound to condemn her husband and her people in the family, for, her intensely feminine aspirations were all in long crisis of conflict with them. On one hand it is indicated that her life-story was a story of an individual versus the society; on the other hand it is reflected that her own sentimentalism was responsible for all her anguish. The gender-bias she observed with as she went on writing poems, stories, essays, established her entity as a woman more than a creative writer. Neither she could evade her womanhood nor could she escape its consciousness in her writings. Kamala's anguish and cry for fulfillment did not allow her to rise above the physicality and sentimentality of womanhood.

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