



Confessional Style Of Writing In The Poems Of Kamala Das

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Abstract: Confessional Poetry is a type of narrative and lyric verse dealing with the facts and intimate mental and physical experiences of the poet's own life. In such poetry, like a mirror, the self is a primary concern which is treated with utmost frankness, and lack of restraint, written in ordinary speech and using open forms. The readers can connect their lives with the confessional poetry as it represents different aspects of human life.

A group of poets who have become known as confessional has also engendered much debate. For the female writers, confessional poetry is a medium where they can expose their psychological feelings. Kamala Das has mostly been assessed as a writer in this genre of confessional poetry. She projects her emotion as well as represents the reality of the world through portraying her own experience. She has created a permanent place for herself in the contemporary Indo – Anglican Poetry by taking the literary world in the mid-sixties. She became one of the pioneering Post-Independence Indian English Poets to have contributed immensely to the growth and development of Modern Indian English Poetry.

Index Terms - Confessional, engendered, psychological, contemporary, pioneering

I. INTRODUCTION

Indian English Poetry obviously began under a curious historical accident of the arrival of the British People. However, a small group of Indian People used language for poetry and for their creative purposes. The new poets in Indian Writing in English initiated their voice in poetry in a manner that resembled with the pattern of Confessional style of writing. This Style of Writing emerged in the late 1950's and early 1960's.

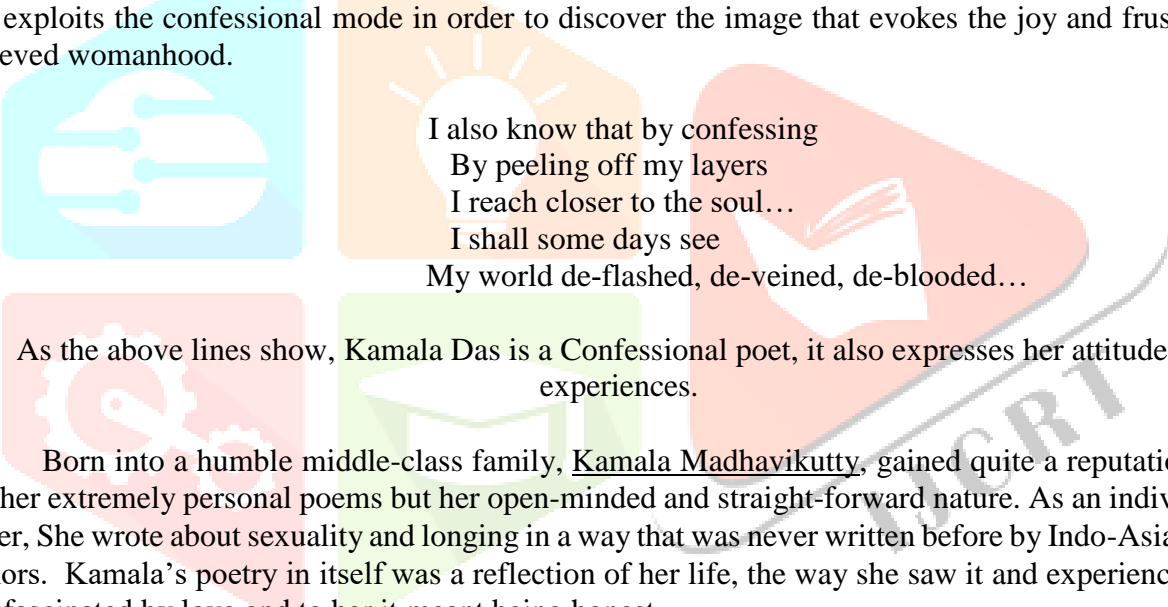
The word 'Confession' is not at all a new genre in literature. As it is the disclosure of some sort, the confessional style of writers reveal private or clinical matters about themselves. Confessional poetry is the poetry which springs from the personal or private compulsions of a poet. Confessional poetry is a type of narrative and lyric verse dealing with the facts and intimate mental and physical experiences of the poet's own life. It is a branch of modern poetry.

The poetry of confessional poets is one of the modern fields of poetry. Confessional poetry is hybrid mode of poetry that comes to existence as a consequence of the popularization of the psychological studies. It means objective analytical or even clinical observations of incidents from one's life. It is important at this point what Robert Philips rightly observes: "Confessional art whether poetry or not, is a means of killing the beasts which are within us, those dreadful dragons of dreams and experiences that must be hunted down concerned and exposed in order to be destroyed". (Philips, Robert. 2)

Through confessional style of writing the poet reveals directly or indirectly his or her own experiences and psychological problems in the poems. While these poems frequently engage in what is repressed, hidden and falsified, defining them as 'confessional' undermines the creative ability of the writer to construct a persona or imaginary scenario that is separate from their lives. The confessional poets are not merely interested in recording their emotions on paper, craft and construction are also extremely important. The poet does not expect any redemption. They focus too exclusively upon the pain, anguish and viciousness of life at the expense of its pleasure and beauty. Needless to say that confessional poetry initiated a new direction in poetry, and influenced a good number of young poets.

The study of Indian English Poetry is incomplete without the study of women poets. Like many Indian English poets, Kamala Das also draws heavily from her personal life and she successfully manages to connect her personal life experiences. She is undoubtedly a confessional poet and in this respect she may be regarded an outstanding Indian English Poet. As a confessional poet, she displays feminist ethos in her poems. She started writing in open form and in open language. Her poetry especially displays moral courage with anti-establishment in content and alienation in common theme.

She strives to establish her identity as a woman through her poems, and she, in fact, tried also to impact an identity to Indian woman as a neglected class of Indian society. Being a confessional poet Kamala Das takes the reader into the world of her personal and private life and unveils the delicate facts. Kamala Das also writes with a frankness and openness unusual in Indian Poetry. Most Indian Poets in English do not have the candour of Kamala Das in creatively analyzing and evaluating their experience. She exploits the confessional mode in order to discover the image that evokes the joy and frustration of achieved womanhood.



I also know that by confessing
By peeling off my layers
I reach closer to the soul...
I shall some days see
My world de-flashed, de-veined, de-blooded...

As the above lines show, Kamala Das is a Confessional poet, it also expresses her attitude and experiences.

Born into a humble middle-class family, Kamala Madhavikutty, gained quite a reputation for not just her extremely personal poems but her open-minded and straight-forward nature. As an individualistic writer, She wrote about sexuality and longing in a way that was never written before by Indo-Asian women authors. Kamala's poetry in itself was a reflection of her life, the way she saw it and experienced it. She was fascinated by love and to her it meant being honest.

In her later years, after her husband's death she converted into Islam and became a Muslim which was shocked by everyone. She changed her name to Kamala Surayya and continued writing. She passed away in 2009 leaving behind quite a legacy for being bold and unafraid.

Confessional poets take the readers into confidence about their personal and private life, and reveal those facts of their life. One such writer is Kamala Das. Being a pre-eminently confessional poet, she may be regarded as an outstanding Indo-Anglican poet. She has expressed her intense desire to confess in a very graphic manner. Her confessions pertain to her poetry is a confession of her relationship with her husband, and of her extra-marital sexual relationship.

Kamala Das offers a range of highly volatile emotions with her poems, changing direction and gaining effect from her inner contrasts, conflicts, ironies and satires. Obviously, she is known for her confessional poetry for the shocking disclosures of the most intimate and private experiences of physical type or precisely her experiences as female. While this mode enables her to unburden her guilt-ridden self, she on her part, shape and perfect the mode, taking it to the utmost point. The confessional mode achieves its most glorious form in her poetic exploits.

The flexibility and freedom offered by the confessional form of expression eventually enables Kamala Das to give voice to the cries of her heart. She also expresses her depression and inner feeling through this confessional mode. She takes poetry as a medium to express her experiences of life. Kamala Das also makes a tremendous effort to develop confessional mode as a sort of poetic medicine to treat mental vacancy and even physical ailments. She wrote most of her poetry, when she was undergoing mental and sexual suffering and, as she confessed several times, an emotional volcano was building inside her.

She confesses her intense desire of escaping from her husband's clutches and attaining freedom. She also confesses that failure of husband's love, through one of the poems,

“Love became a swivel-door
When one went out, another came in
Then I lost count, for always in my arms
Was a substitute for a substitute”.

Confessional poetry sounds so appealing and so convincing. It frequently takes resort to personal failures and mental illness of its composer. Kamala's verse is a brilliant illustration of it. Likewise, Kamala Das's well-known poem called “*An Introduction*” is truly a confessional poem which is at once her poetic manifesto and a defence of dignity. It is perhaps the most famous of the poems written by her in a self-reflective and confessional tone from her maiden publication *Summer in Calcutta* (1965).

The confessional mode in ‘*An Introduction*’ does not hinder its development from personal to general. The poem deals with poet's strong feminine sensibility. It is frankly confessional, terrific, authentic and exclusively an articulate voice of the feminine sensibility. The poet sketches growing from child to woman, how she becomes young and how her limbs swell. The poet reveals that her early marriage seems to have given a rude jolt to the sensibility as a woman.

The woman in Kamala Das is struggling between passion and tradition. She wants to be free by breaking the chains around her. She does not want to be domesticated because her real self will be vanished as she says in ‘*An Introduction*’:

“Dress in sarees, be girl
Be wife, they said. Be embroidered, be cook,
Be a quarreller with categorizers. Don't sit
On walls or peep in through our lace-draped windows.
Be Amy or be Kamala or better
Still, be Madhavikutty. It is time to
Choose a name, a role.” (35-42)

Confessional poetry sounds so appealing and so convicting. It frequently takes resorts to personal failures and mental illness of its composer. ‘*The Sunshine Cat*’ is a poem of her mental illness in the company of a cruel husband, in it we have:

“Her husband shut her in,
Locked in a room of books
With a streak of sunshine
Lying near the door. . . .
When He returned to take her out she was a cold and
Half dead woman now of no use at all to men.” (14-22)

The female persona in her poems yearns for pleasures and emotional warmth beyond sexual gratification represents in the poem *Freaks*:

.....Can this man with
Nimble finger – tips unleash
Nothing more alive than the
Skin's lazy hungers. (9-12)

In her poem *The Suicide*, she expresses her desire to commit suicide. She explores her desire to die when she is unable to find true love. She says:

O sea, I am fed up
I want to be simple
I want to be loved
And
If love is not to be had
I want to be dead, just dead...(Das 1967:2)

Kamala's poetry in itself was a reflection of her life, the way she saw it and experienced it. She was fascinated by love and to her it meant being honest. In her poem, *The Looking Glass*, she urges woman to give the man she loves, everything that makes her a woman.

“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.” (12-16)

As a Confessional poet, she mostly confines herself to the reasons of her own experience. By showing she becomes very frank and honest, close and intimate, in her details. That's why 'confessional poetry sounds so appealing and so convincing. As Kamala Das is devoid of getting emotional attachment from her husband, that's why she keeps relationship with many unknown person to get pure love. Such a confessional attitude of Kamala Das has heightened her universal appeal. Thus, Kamala Das as a typical Confessional poet, she pours her straightforwardness in her poems and became a trend setter in Indian English poetry.

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