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“A Literary revolt in the writing of Kamla Das in Indian English writing”

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ABSTRACT:

Writing in English has been continuing much more prior to Kamla Das but what made her more demanding and much popular among all the Indian English Poets or writer is her contradiction with self. She boldly writes about sexual approach in marital life in a male- dominated society or it is proper to say a patriarchal one. Kamala Das (1934–2009) is one of the pioneer confessional poet in Indian English writing in the same vein like her American counterparts like Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton. She suffered a mismatched marital life like Sylvia Plath or better to say T.S.Eliot in terms of Wasteland which was a production of non-fitting martial life leads her also toward writing and later her writings reflects the social disparity, sexual oppression, Individualism and self freedom in the point of view of a woman.

She wrote in two languages the one is Malyalam and the other is English and the one which can be tangibly seen in her writing when she says:

“I am Indian, very brown, born in Malabar,

I speak three languages, write in

Two, dream in one”.

Despite having dissatisfaction of her personal life and frustration she grew a suicidal tendency for her life but It was the act of writing poems which helped her to get out of that claustrophobic situation and to release her problems through the living words and got happiness in her world of words that she wove. Poems gave her a therapeutic relief and a way to live life in between her contradicting situations.

KEYWORDS: Confessional poetry, Self Freedom, ID crisis, sex, Indian writing in English,

Introduction:

Kamala Surayya (31 March 1934 – 31 May 2009), popularly known by her one-time pen name Madhavikutty and married name Kamala Das, was an English poet as well as a leading Malayalam author from Kerala, India. She was very popular in Kerala for her short stories and autobiography while her oeuvre in English, written under the name Kamala Das, is noted for the poems and explicit autobiography. She was also a columnist and wrote on diverse topics including women's issues, child care, politics. She was born in a conservative Hindu Nair family having royal ancestry. She converted to Islam on December 11, 1999, at the age of 65 and assumed the name Kamala Surayya. She died at the age of 75 on 31st of May 2009 in Pune.

She was brought up in an artistic auro where she felt all ignored and unaffected by love and affection which later speculated her and made her unmixed in others. At a very early age she was married with an older relative which was the end of her emotional growth and her happy life and a starting of being introvert which cause emotional and sexual problems she felt herself only the object of carnal desire which can be seen in her writing.. Her style of writing is free from sign, pattern and other set format of literature. Kamla Das broke with conventions in her personal life as well in her writing. she had extramarital affairs with men and women and refused to identify herself as a feminist. In 1999 she converted to Islam, renaming herself Kamala Suraiya.

Although It is not easy to draw a clear picture from the shifting textual ground of Kamla Das yet to contemplate about her writing in search of a language shows the impressions of her childhood or say a kind of inability of decision that compels her to say:

“Don't write in English, they said, English is
Not your mother-tongue. Why not leave
Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,
Every one of you?”

But it is her determination that takes her out from the confusions of thoughts to choose the language that makes her comfortable to write or to speak it also reveals a social barrier of the language of her time.

“The language I speak,
Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses
All mine, mine alone.”

She appears to be preoccupied with love and sex since she did not find any solace instead faced herself as an object of carnal love and isolated from the emotion she was having during her marital life. She wrote:

“Every morning I told myself that I must raise myself from the desolation of m life
and escape,
Escape, escape into another life and into another country”.

She was the first Indian woman in English writing who revolts and retorts this male dominated system through her writings. She was much aware of the politics of her time and knew how the world is ruled by the male. She has memorized the names of few politicians and reminds that how India is kept in male hands.

The poetry of Kamala Das gives a very less evidence to have been subjected to the

recovery of wholeness rather than self concerned as a fiction of circumstances and sexual humiliations. Her voice was distinctly feminine intoning the organic mission of her female self's longing for love contrasting her statement of being not feminist. She has a crude manifestations in her voice which was presented through persona in her prose writings

she was found on writing the consistent attention to female sexual life and detailed intimate process of love making due to which she was for a decade demised because she wrote on the topics like coming of age and sexual yearnings of a woman. Which was a taboo of the time.

She wrote in her poem *The Looking Glass*:

*“notice the perfection of his limbs, his eyes reddening under
shower, the shy walk across the bathroom floor,
dropping towels, and the jerky way he
urinates, All the fond details that make
Him male and your only man. Gift him all,
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.”*

Kamla Das has also touched homosexuality in her writing. In *MY Story*, she writes about her husband and his friend when they meet they act like lovers and celebrate her birthday in a room. She wonders that what two men could possibly do together shoving his wife out in a bedroom. After marriage, a woman wants her husband to show some compassion and love to her instead locking her in bedroom. But at the same time a contradiction can be seen in her writing and thus she is found in between two dual thoughts

*“ He did not beat me
But my sad woman-body felt so beaten.
The weight of my breasts and womb crushed me.
I shrank Pitifully. “*

There is another aspects of Das is that she also wrote about the rejected community of the society with a great importance and perspective. She provides a concrete observations to identify the unseen and trodden community who are also sufferer of ID crisis the poem such as “The Dance of the Eunuchs,” that is feminine arch poetic self encountered.

her self encountered realization in Calcutta was the awareness of the hollowness in her writing:

‘the heart an empty cistern, waiting for long hours’.

she as a poet strongly committed to the carnal world and always attempts to identify love with physical emptiness which was the attempts to redefine her own sustain relationship.

It was her suffering and dissatisfaction that keeps her moving from one arm to another or from one bed to another in her style of expression.

she writes in “The Wild Bougainville.”

“yearned for a man from another town.....then, by and by

It was her suffering that led her to seek place in another’s arm to knock at another’s door –

“...Readers were witnessed to a different form of writing in Introduction that was concerned with the question of human identity, and was related to the urges predicament of encountering a problem: “What am I?” Das has presented a rebellion voice against conventional hypocrisy of the society.

Kamla Das once was in interview, she herself said, "I always wanted love, and if you don't get it within your home, you stray a little" Das, according to many others has never tried to identify herself with any particular approach of feminist activities.

With her having many unfold aspects as a writer, a woman, a wife and above all a mother, Kamala Suraiyya Das has been credited as one of the few writers who understood feminism to the core and writes true to the best.

Kamla Das lived all detached and aloof in her worlds with feelings of aloofness and yet maintained her inner voice she always felt that poetry meant studying life and its objectivity in a very realistic approach of life having brutal experience of different spheres.

she in search of ‘I’ admits that like men she is also a sinner and a saint, beloved and betrayed. She has no difference in joy and pains like men and emancipates herself to the level of ‘I’. It reflects her identity crisis in the circumstances she was in.

She writes:

I am sinner,

I am saint, I am the beloved and the

Betrayed. I have no joys that are not yours, no

Aches which are not yours. I too call myself I.

She experiences having desire to meet the man who desires a woman to quench his lust and as a woman desires love from a man. Here, she is talking about his identity in the patriarchal society in view of feminist perspective. She wants the answers of that

‘I’ which is the male-ego that gives him liberty to do whatever he likes. Therefore, this aspect of Das can be understood that she had a desire to have self freedom or more to say liberty to do what she intends to do as she did in her later life.

Her writings touched the different aspects that a woman longs for her identity, freedom, sexual satisfaction and the most important is liberty to expression. She was known for her frank and explicit expression. She leaves behind a legacy that is hard to be fulfilled, a legacy where she could touch human heart with her lucid and charming style and great range of words.

Her open and strict style of writing on female sexuality, free from any sense of guilt, infused her writing with power, freedom, self expression and the most important her confession of what she feels about even her personal indulgences thus she marked her as an iconoclast in her generation.

The world of poetry and prose will remind her for her true writing.

Happy Reading!!

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