



## **Kamala Das: The Voice Of Indian Woman's Quest For Liberation**

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***Abstract:***

*Kamala Das born on March 31, 1934 in Malabar, Kerala. Das is one of the best known contemporary Indian Women Writers. Writing in two languages, English and Malayalam, Das has authored many autobiographical works and novels. Several well received collections of poetry in English, numerous volumes of short stories, and essays on a broad spectrum of subjects. Since the publication of her first collection of poetry, "Summer In Calcutta"(1965), Das has been considered an important voice of her generation, exemplified by a break from the past by writing in a distinctly Indian Persona rather than adopting the techniques of the English modernists. Her poetry is the most moving and tortured. Credited as the most outspoken and even controversial writer, Kamala Das earned fame as the 'Voice of Women's Sexuality'. Apart from writing in English, Das also wrote under pen name Madhavikutty in Malayalam before her conversion to Islam. Her popularity in Kerala was credited mostly to her short stories and the autobiographical 'My Story', which was translated into fifteen languages, a book where she openly discussed her unsatisfactory sexual life with Madhava Das, her husband.*

*The poetess 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 aspiration are not taken into account. The intensity of the protest, conveyed in conversational idiom and rhythm, make it symbolic of the protest of all womanhood against the male ego. she was married at the early age of fifteen, and that her marriage proved an absolute failure. It was the failure of her marriage that compelled her to enter into extra-marital sexual relationships in search of the kind of love which her husband had failed to give her. Her husband was a believer in sex as a matter of routine; and his wife was therefore by no means starved of the pleasure of sex. She, on the contrary, believed in marriage as an emotional and spiritual bond; and her husband's coldness in this respect led her to feel acutely dissatisfied and discontented in life and, not finding real love even in her extra-marital affairs, she slid into a life of sexual anarchy, with one lover following another, and with her discontent becoming deeper and deeper till it assumed the form of utter despair. Her poetry is generally called confessional poetry because it is a record of her personal experiences, chiefly in the sphere of marriage and sex, though it certainly has a wider range and includes a few other aspects of life too. Kamala Das is always sincere, always true to herself both in her prose and her poetry. As a wife she was expected to look to the comforts of her husband, to minister to his needs, in short, to play the conventional role of a Hindu wife, and this has dwarfed and stunted her own personality. . It was her suffering that led her to seek place in another's arm to knock at another's door- "...yearned for a man from/another town", as she writes in *The Wild Bougainvillea*. Das once herself said in an interview to the *Warrior*, "I always wanted love, and if you don't get it within your home, you stray a little".*

*Kamala Das lived alone in her world with feelings of loneliness. During her childhood, Kamala, like other children in the Nair family, was almost completely neglected except her grandmother. She tells it in her autobiography.*

**Keywords:** *Kamala Das, Feminism, Quest for Liberation, Indian Woman's Struggle.*

### 1.Introduction

Kamala Das is one among the prominent figures in the history of Indo-English literature. Kamala Das published many volumes of poetry between 1965 and 1985. She tells of intensely personal experiences, including her growth into womanhood, her unsuccessful quest for love in and outside of marriage.

Her poetry reveals the dilemmas and poignant situations faced by her under the strain of her longing for love, sex and resultant loneliness. She is obsessed with such passions as love and sex. She 'pines for what is not there'. She faces the pains of loneliness and alienation even in her child-hood. Neither her parents nor the society in which she grew helped her to free herself from this loneliness. As she complains about her parents:-

"They took us for granted and considered us mere puppets, moving our limbs according to the tugs they gave us-I felt myself to be an intruder in any room rather than mine-every morning I told myself that I must raise my-self from the desolation of my life and escape, escape into another life and into another country"<sup>1</sup>

Marriage does not provide her any solace or comfort from this loneliness .In her married life she has to face only lust and sex. She got no freedom in selecting an ideal lover for her. Kamala Das never liked the way her parents moved about and fixed her marriage without, even trying to know her ideas and aspirations and she finds herself as a helpless victim:-

".....I was

A victim of a young man's Carnal

Heingee & perhaps out of our

Union, there would be

Born a few children"<sup>2</sup>

While recollecting the first sexual experience from the first night she says:-

"Then without any warning he fell on me, surprising me

by the extreme brutality of the attack"<sup>3</sup>

This 'brutal attack' lends in her a sense of helplessness and alienation which prompts Kamala Das to become a rebel and she looks down up on all her relations with contempt and disgust. The immature sexual approach of her husband -developed contempt against the bonds of married life and male-domination. Her injured feminine self-attempted to explore an identity and freedom. For this task she experimented herself with sexual adventures and suicide attempts. Her longing for true love gives her neither the peace of

mind nor the emotional fulfilment. She complains of the failure of love within and without the bonds of marriage.

One cannot help others without helping oneself. She immortalizes the splendor of nature and human relationships in her poetry, where personal experiences turn into universal on account of passionate expression.

Kamala Das's voice, earthy and direct, sheds a harsh light on everything around us, revealing small stuff that we never knew existed in us.

In the poetry of Kamala Das, she strongly recommends that the presence of love is necessary to make any kind of healthy and long lasting relationship between man and woman. Whether it is a bond of husband and wife or lover and beloved or it is bond of mother and son, all types of man-woman relationship can be made only by a bond of love.

The poetry of Kamala Das must be viewed in the light of her feminine consciousness. She acquired these circumstances dependent upon the society of her childhood days. As a poet, she is conscious of her creative faculties and tries to break chains and restraints. She indulges in self-awareness, self-exploration and Self-introspection in order to define herself poetically. She finds herself condemned to play the part, apart from her feminine self. It is the male society, which compels her to choose her roles according to their convenience. She is forced to act either as a slave or an idol. Her personality reflects her worse condition of woman. She writes in My Story:

"Often I have toyed with the idea of drowning myself; o get rid of my loneliness which is not unique in any way but: is natural to all. I have wanted to find rest in the sea and an escape from involvements".<sup>4</sup>

Thus her feminine self is, traditionally, associated with the enclosed world of household under the disguise as a mother; a wife and a helpmate.

She wants to escape from her frustrated memory in 'Substitute' where the reaction of her body shocks her feminine self, she says: "Our bodies after love making turning away rejecting our works began to sound like clatter of sounds in fight".<sup>23</sup> Such psychic-painful experience during her quest for emotional involvement with her husband compelled her to take freedom in suicide. Love for her has become a mechanical affair and lovers a series of substitutes: She says again:

- "After that love become a swivel-door, When one went out, another came in."<sup>5</sup>

“Dress in sarees , be girl,  
Be wife, they said, Be embroiderer, be cook,  
Be a quarreler with servants. Fit in, oh!  
Belong, cried the categorizers. Don't Sit  
On Walls or peep in through lace-draped windows.  
Be Amy, or be Kamala. Or, better  
Still, be Madhavikutty. It time to  
Choose a name, a role”.<sup>6</sup>

In the old playhouse, the playhouse is the poet's mind in which floating sensations, regrets and floating pieces of thought and memory are the actors which act their part in the dark with all the light shut out. The poem is the poet's protest against the domination of the male and the consequent dwarfing of the female.

“You called me wife.  
I was taught to break saccharine in to 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”.<sup>7</sup>

As sharp, bitter note, Symbolic of her frustration and disgust, is struck from the very beginning:

“You planned to tame a swallow, to hold her  
In the long summer of your love so that she would forget  
Not the raw seasons alone, and the homes left behind, but  
Also her nature, the urge to fly, and the endless  
Pathways of the sky”.<sup>8</sup>

“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”.<sup>9</sup>

To Kamala Das, she finds death desirable because, for her life is not going to be redeemed, or made new. The escapes she seeks in physical love are also suicides in the sense that, they can affect a temporary merging of the dualities within oneself.

She has no hesitation in admitting that she has miserably failed on all fronts in her life. She even can hardly believe that she has lost everything in her life. She feels all ‘lost’ in losses:

“It is hard to believe  
That I only lost  
Lost all, lost even  
What I never had”.<sup>10</sup>

Kamala Das’s married life was a complete failure and it ended in deep frustration and mental agony. She feels no hesitation in admitting that her marriage has been an utter failure; it is a fake drama of love only:

“Who can  
Help us who have lived so long  
And have failed in love”?<sup>11</sup>

In her personal life Kamala Das always faced frustration; but her poetry proved to be the medium for the outlet of her feeling of frustration and for the purgation of this feeling:

“You let me use my youth like coins  
Into various hands, you let me mate with shadows,  
You let me sing in empty shrines, you let your wife  
Seek ecstasy in other’s arms”.<sup>12</sup>

Kamala Das writes about herself. So she imparts a personal touch to words.

“Chose my clothes for me

My tutor, my hobbies, my friends

And at fifteen with my first saree

You picked me husband’.<sup>13</sup>

“The tragedy of life

Is not death but growth”.<sup>14</sup>

**2.Reference**

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