



"YOU WANT ME TO BE LIKE YOU, PAPA" THE DEPICTION OF 'FATHER FIGURE' IN THE POETRY OF MAMTA KALIA AND KAMALA DAS

JALPA RANA

PGT, Kendriya Vidyalaya, Gandhinagar



ABSTRACT

The modern women poetry reveals the frustrations and tensions which women face because of the difference between the way they want to behave and the way they are made to behave. The well-established patriarchal structure still continues to control and restrict the lives of women in one way or the other. It still considers that women are someone's daughters, wives or mothers, minus their own personality. The present paper focuses on the description of 'Father Figure' in the poetry of Mamta Kalia and Kamala Das. As Confessional poets Mamta Kalia and Kamala Das have described father figure in their various poems. Their attempt to self discovery leads to interrogate that they have not been only born as a woman but they have their own identity and their own dreams to fulfill..

KEYWORDS: Father Figure, poetry, Mamta Kalia, KamalaDas.

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The woman character in poems of Mamta Kalia and Kamala Das plays various roles- rebel daughter, the unfulfilled wife, mistress to lusty men, silent long-suffering women etc. Their main concern is the sorrow of women. Their poetry become confessional and a form of protest against a male-dominated society.

Mamta Kalia's "Tribute to Papa", is according to Eunice De Souza, one of the most compelling poems. She figures out an opposition not only to men's dominance over women but women's acceptance of men's dominance. Mamta Kalia's personal rejection of the non-materialist father however ironic in its tone is a 'tribute' to the contemporary materialistic Father India.

The poem moves from one hateful statement to another, with extreme indifference to traditional Indian values. Not only are the father's ideals for the daughter rejected scornfully, but his normal way of life insulted. As a daughter Mamta

Kalia is preoccupied by the father figure. Father in her case becomes a symbol of male-dominance.

In her poem A Tribute to Papa Mamta Kalia pays a different kind of tribute to her father, stating that her ideas and values clash with those of her father's:

"Everything about you clashes with nearly everything about me."

Mamta Kalia also rebels against patriarchy and the restrained world of middle-class respectability. Such poems are haunted by the memories of her father:

"But you've always wanted to be a model man,

A sort of an ideal.

When you can't think of doing anything,

You start praying,

Spending useless hours at the temple. "

In *Tribute to Papa* she interrogates even her father for his observance to customs, traditions and complains of the generation gap she feels with him.

She has liberal views but at the same time she finds it hard to defy the commandments of her father:

"You suspect I am having a love-affair these days,
But you're too shy to have it confirmed
What if my tummy starts showing gradually
And I refuse to have it curretted?
But I'll be careful, Papa,
Or I know you'll at once think of suicide."

The poem 'Tribute to Papa and Other Poems' brings out the contrast between her father's idealism which could not give prosperity on him and her fascination for modern life which is without idealism and values:

Who cares for you Papa?Who cares for
your clean thoughts, clean words, clean
teeth?Who wants to be an angel like you?
Who want sit?
You are an unsuccessful man, Papa.

As a rebellious daughter says:

"These days I am seriously thinking of
disowning you,"

The mutual disenchantment has grown so much that she even thinks of disowning her father and his blessedness. She mourns about her father's status that he could not make a grand and 'cozy place' for himself so he is an unsuccessful man from the 'worldly point of view. If he had enough guts to 'smuggle eighty thousand watches' then she would proudly tell everyone about her father's import-export business.

"I wish you had guts, Papa,
To smuggle eighty thousand watches at a
stroke,
And I'd proudly say, My father's in import-
export business, you know
I'd be proud of you then.

She asserts that she does not want to be a model. She expresses her frustration over her father idealism in these lines,

"You want me to be like you,
Papa, Or like Rani Lakshmibai.
You're not sure what greatness is,
But you want me to be great.

Thus, in this poem she rejects her father's notions of greatness and the Indian model of a woman as Laxmibai who fought and died in one sense not for

the sake of women but for her son that patriarchy would not mind. Mamta Kalia rejects her father's life of limited dreams. She proposes to choose her own course and follow her ideals. Ironically, she claims her father to be —an unsuccessful man and defines the clash between the old and new value.

Kamala Das is a representative, of ardent Feminist voice and she becomes the spokes woman of all the victimized women in society. Kamala Das's poetry focused on themes like the memories of childhood life in the family house. she felt the lack of these at quite an early age. Her parents' behavior was apathetic towards her. They were not so caring ones as it is reflected in her autobiography. This is about her father:

"He was not of an affectionate nature so
We grew up more or less neglected,
(*Summer in Calcutta,*)

She could not get affection in her childhood. She says about her father that,

'They took us for granted and considered us
mere puppets,
moving our limbs according to the tugs they
gave us,
they did not stop for a moment to think
that
we had personalities that were developing
independently'

When Kamala Das was nine years old her father, used to come home on leave. He found her to have become rustic for his liking and sent her into a boarding school run by Roman Catholics. Kamala Das looks up on this period as a black period and records her reactions in the poem '*Punishment in Kindergarten*'.

Children are funny thing, they laugh
In mirth at other's tears, I buried
My face in the sun-warmed hedge
And smelt the flowers and the pain.

She wants to erase the memory of that bitter experience and could not excuse her father for his hasty decision of marrying her at the age of fifteen with a man much older to her in age, with a different temperament. His brutal attitude towards sex starts reminding her about her father. From that stage onwards, she could not forget that her father was responsible for her miserable experience.

In the poem 'An Introduction' she directly accused her father, who had betrayed her:

I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask

For, he drew a youth of sixteen into the Bed room and closed the door He did not beat me

But my sad woman-body felt so beaten.

Kamala Das surprises her readers when she looks at her father's death as dramatically. In her poem 'My Father's Death,' she becomes more confessional. There is a trace of envy at her father who died an important man because she feels that his success was at the cost of his family. The love, which was due to her, was underprivileged. She says:

He was generous with money,
As generous as I was with
love. There was a cloud of tension between
him and me."

Her confessions become more intense as the poem moves on:

Did he seem close to me, and I
Whispered into his ears that I
Loved him although I was bad, a bad
Daughter, a writer of tales that
Hurt, but in the task of loving ...

She could not restrain herself from blaming her dead father.

You should have hugged me, father,
just Once held me to your breast,
you should have asked me
who I was, in truth.

Man-woman relationship is essentially based on mutual understanding, love, respect and trust which are in core of governing true relations. As grown both the poets longed for a peaceful relationship which could make sufficient compensation for all the loss they had sustained in their childhood, in their parental house Conversation, companionship and warmth. Women like this relationship as this is the only male relationship which provides protection and affection without the physical in it. It is disliked as father is the first dominating male in life and a representative of the patriarchal society. (Bajaj)

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