

MY STORY A FEMINISTIC PERSPECTIVE: A STUDY OF KAMALA DAS**T.SUJANI**

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**T.SUJANI***Article Info:*Received on: 15/03/2013Revised From :16/03/2013Accepted on:16/05/2013**ABSTRACT**

This paper "My Story a Feministic Perspective: A study of Kamala Das," delineates the character of the author Kamala Das with special reference to her autobiography MY STORY. Kamala Das has the courage and boldness to speak out her mind and withstand the excoriations of the male dominated society. Her life is an open book of controversies. Right from her childhood she is a kind of girl who resisted authority and rebelled against colonial mindset of injustice, cruelty and discrimination. She disparaged her father's autocratic ways and her husband's uncaring and unloving attitude in her own style. This is in fact a self revelation of the author where she unravels the secrets of her thoughts without any inhibitions.

INTRODUCTION

Very few people have the nerve to speak out their mind and people who do this are the cynosures of controversies. Kamala Das is one such poet who voices her dreams and passions without any inhibitions. There are always two psychological reasons for making her controversial. One is inferiority complex and the other one is jealousy. People cannot digest her masculine ways of disclosing her mind and very few could appreciate her courage to be frank and direct while speaking of love. Kamala Das's works though limited are marked by originality, authenticity, honesty and courage.

STORY

The language of Kamala Das's works is structured to express powerfully her longings, frustrations, sadness, happiness and the territory of her unconscious. She cannot be separated from her language as a dancer cannot be from her dance. It would be relevant here to quote Margaret Atwood who said talking of women

novelists and poets "The rabbits they produce are only common rabbits after all it is the hat that's magic." The hat is language-"It fuels our curiosity". She continues "the mix of the familiar, even banal, and the radically inexpressible"(Rev.10).

For French feminists there is a distinct "écriture feminine" i.e., writing what is essentially, characteristically feminine or female in language and style. To make distinctions on these lines may lead to sexual polarization. In this context one would like to be reminded of Nadine Gordimer's statement "By and large I don't think it matters a damn what sex a writer is, so long as the work is that of a real writer"(Rev.13). It can be said that Kamala Das is a real writer.

Kamala in her autobiography "My Story" writes how she felt neglected as a child; Both her parents were busy in their own way and could not give time or care for their children. Kamala and her brother are starved of emotional sustenance and parental concern in their childhood when they needed most.

He was not of an affectionate nature, so we grew up more or less neglected, and because we were aware of ourselves as neglected children in a social circle that pampered the young, there developed between us a strong relationship of love the kind a leper may feel for his mate who pushed him on a hand-cart when they went on their begging rounds.(MS.1,2).

The metaphor of the leper makes the reader aware of her depressing loneliness. Loneliness is a state of mind which either develops inferiority complex or cynical attitude to life. But in case of Kamala Das, it made her all the more strong, strong enough to protest injustice in any form.

The way the Indian children were treated by the Britishers in European schools anguished her. Moreover the humiliations meted out to the native students seemed very very unfair and barbarous. The racial and colour discrimination had hurt her pride. When her brother was bullied savagely in the European school she was mad with impotent rage. She could not tolerate such bullying. Though her brother kept quite, she scratched the boy's face unafraid of the consequences. She rebelled against the colonial mindset of injustice, cruelty and discrimination.

The feeling that she was not properly being appreciated haunted her all the time. She couldn't find a suitable company. The poems which she wrote at the tender age of six, reflected her emotional state. The subject matter of her poems was 'dolls with no heads'. She felt so sad and gloomy seeing the dolls that lost their heads. She felt pity for those, as they will have to remain like that forever. The dolls are metaphors of something vital lost forever.

"I was six and very sentimental. I wrote sad poems about dolls that lost their heads and had to remain headless for eternity. Each poem of mine made me cry(MS.8). Her overwhelming sense of deprivation and pleasures of joyful growth were reflected in her poems. She boldly faced the state of neglect through art. She found a vehicle to carry her emotional starvation in her poetry. Lack of parental love has its impact on the psychological needs and necessities of the child. When she longed for the warmth and affection of her mother, she failed to provide the comfort, the child craved for. Her need for the maternal care and concern was so great that she missed even the presence of "full time maid" in the

house. Even at such a tender age she felt that love which binds one another tightly in a close knitted family is missing at their home. A morbid sense of deprivation enveloped her as a result of lack of understanding between the parents. One can easily understand that they are biological parents unable to fulfill the needs of children for emotional, psychological and spiritual sustenance.

Even as a child she has the audacity to violate the custom of not calling the older people by name. She liked the spirit of boldness in others. She disliked her mother's timidity. She understood her timidity as she was born in a male dominated society where man tried his level best to establish his supremacy and sovereignty over woman. She wrote how her father had imposed on her mother his Gandhian principles immediately after betrothal and how he made her remove all her jewelry without even asking for her consent.

After the wedding he made her remove all the gold ornaments from her person, all except the 'mangalasutra'. To her it must have seemed like taking to widow's weeds, but she did not protest(MS.4).

This was the pathetic situation of women whose position was lower to men. The women always looked at men for their sustenance and never even once got the idea of protesting against the injustice done to them. It is because of their submissive nature 'domestic harmony' prevailed says kamala. However superior are women in their skills, they will have to remain inferior to men and be submissive to patriarchal ideas of gender relation and hierarchy.

The autocratic ways of her father gave a new turn to her life when he fixed Kamala's marriage with Mr.Das much older man in age. What she detested most, was her father's authoritative ways. Neither her mother nor her father had any concern for her feelings. She felt very sad and unhappy, for her life was now not in her hands. It had been planned and charted out by her parents and relatives. Very soon she was married to Mr.Madhava Das when she was fifteen years old.

Love for this fifteen-year-old was all poetry; to her it meant music, and moonlight, bird song and bed of roses, it was a beautifully sweet, intimate relationship between a man and a woman (Harish 47).

Her dreams lie in shambles. She is disillusioned about her idea of love. The harsh reality of life saddened her and made her unhappy and desperate. Slowly the child bride started understanding the different facets of love. Very soon she realized that, like her mother's life, her life too is going to be dull, mechanical and monotonous. The more she craved for emotional attachment, the more she got disentangled from her husband. She wished that her husband would be soft, gentle and kind. But his rude and harsh behavior hurt her much. She dreamt of her man who would be special and different. But she was utterly disillusioned as he was a very ordinary man who was highly insensitive. Her awareness of her deprivation was very deep and intense, that she looked for a surrogate parent in her husband and this in turn led to many conflicts.

The humiliation of being treated as a sexual object and vassal in the house underline for her the shallowness of the marital bond. Her 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 (Parmar 71) .

In a married life, man's ego devours wife's freedom. She wants to escape that plight and fly away to explore life's secrets and treasures. Loss of identity and individuality make her dissatisfied. She longs for true love. Having failed to find emotional communion, with her man, her quest for pure love degenerates into lust.

Life is never what we anticipate. There are unexpected and most surprising elements. One should have the courage and confidence to face dire situations with equanimity. This is what women lack and look for support towards their male counter parts at the initial stages of life. As the journey of life continues they start to sustain on their own. This element is highlighted and viewed as feministic aspect. Instead of calling it feminism we can term it the basic instinct of survival.

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