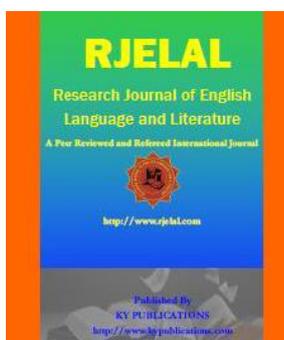




## 'LOVE'S AN ITCH' IN THE POETRY OF KAMALA DAS AND GAURI DESHPANDE

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### ABSTRACT

Kamala Das and Gauri Deshpande have made their place remarkable in modern Indian English poetry. Considered as a confessional poet their poetry is about self, love, sex and lust written in very realistic way. Both the poet have depicted love in their poems as painful and giving frustration and disappointment. They have expected warmth in relationship but get dissatisfaction only. Their married life really was boring and tiresome, romantic idea of marriage which they have dreamed collapsed soon. They value love, beauty, relationships, and emotion, and warm feelings in their life and yearned for an ideal love but fail to get proper love in their life. Their love poetry is different from the love poetry of other Indian poets, their hopeless attempts to search for genuine love is shown in all poems. For them love was as an enriching and blissful experience but treatment of love and sexuality shows how much they were dissatisfied with the society. Their love poetry is an explanation of male cruelty, selfishness and exploitation of the female.

Keywords: Love, relationships, Dissatisfaction

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Indian English literature has been taking a leap during the last few decades and also attracting the international attention. In fact, the post-independence period in the history of Indian English writing is generally compared with the modern period. Post independence Indo- English prose and poetry has characteristics which make it distinctive and different from the writing of the earlier period. Quest for love and search for identity is reflected as notable features of literature created by contemporary Indian writers.

The modern Indo-Anglian women poets try to find meaning through building various relationships of love where they explore the entire range of this overpowering emotion. Poetry is a genre with its more emotional and sentimental nature is perfectly suited for the expression of pain and love. Kamla Das and Gauri Deshpande have a more interesting dimension that they are not only a

feminist who revolt against patriarchy but the demands of joint family. Therefore, their relationship is nothing but the frustrating experience because though they have shared their life together as life-partners for so long, they have not been able to establish their mutual understanding with love and regard for each other's needs. They feel each other like a stranger. In such a situation, there is no optimistic approach about life and love. Empty hearts show emotional sterility, barrenness and the utter meaninglessness of life.

For both the poets love is more like pain, in every form of it gives only disappointment and hurts their soul. Kamala Das very well puts it in her poem:

Ah, why does love come to me like  
Pain  
Again and again and again?

(*Summer in Calcutta* 26)

Postcolonial Indian English Poetry has been enriched by the splendid talent of Kamala Das. Most of her poetry deals with her sense of frustration and alienation. Kamala Das stands as a first poet in Indian English Poetry by expression openly about modern women's voice than any other Indian Woman poets of her time. Das's poetry is for those readers who approach it to identify themselves with the inner sight of the poet and see the world through the eyes of a troubled woman. She successfully used autobiographic mode in her poems. As like other confessional poets, her poetry is about herself only, about her desire for love, her emotional attachment and her failure to achieve such a relationship.

*The sunshine Cat* is an outstanding poem by Kamala Das. She wants to forget the bad memories of her husband, seeks love in others but every male is same. She gets only disgrace. She is so sickened that she needs to clean away the recollections connected to them. Her womanly deep feeling is at its loftiness, this degradation source mental illness, as well as she sobs on her bed and constructs walls of tears roughly her and close up herself within. This is because:

To forget, Oh, to forget... and they said each of  
Them, I don't love, I connect love, it is not  
In my nature to love, but I cannot love,  
it is not but I can be kind to you.  
They lit her slide from pegs of sanity into  
A bed made soft with tears and she lay there weeping,  
For sleep had lost its use, I shall build walls with tears  
She said walls to shut me in. ( *The sunshine Cat*)

Das has not good experience or happy union with her husband. She for her unhappy relationship:

My husband was immersed in his office work,  
and after work there was the dinner followed by sex.  
Where was there anytime  
left for him to want to see the sea or  
the dark buffaloes of the slopes.  
(*Summer in Calcutta*, 16)

Das does not long for physical love. But she craves for an emotional bonding with her man, in reality she receives the carnal pleasures from him:

That was the only kind of love,  
This hacking at each other's parts

Like convicts hacking, breaking clods  
At noon. We were earth under hot  
Sun. There was a burning in our  
Venus and the cool mountain nights.  
Nothing to lessen heat. (Convicts )

The poem 'The Freaks' highlights Mrs.Das's dilemma as a married woman, who has failed on getting true love:

.....Can this man with nimble finger-tips  
unleash Nothing more alive than the skin's lazy  
hungers? who can help us who have lived so long  
And have failed in love? (The Freaks)

When Kamala Das has ending of relationship, she was depressed and frustrated. She tried to settle with the reality of the situation. At the same time, she realized she has no identity of her owns. She expresses how she tried to reunite in married life with an acceptance of responsibilities of married life:

... Oh, never mind I've  
Spent long years trying to locate my mind  
( *Summer in Calcutta*,18)

Her bold confessions about various love episodes have shocked the readers and the critics both. It is first time such kind of poetry is coming from an Indian woman who is mostly considered to be shy, silent and introvert. In her autobiography she says: "I was looking for an ideal lover. I was looking for the one who went to Mathura and forgot to return to his Radha. Perhaps I was seeking the cruelty that lies in the depths of a man's heart. Otherwise why did I not get my place in the arms of my husband?" (*My Story*, Das).

Marriage was beautiful and romantic dream for her but her dreams were shattered when she found herself in a loveless relationship which she has to carry for long. But unfortunately enough she could get nothing from her marriage except pain and sufferings.. Her husband was busy in work. He was uncaring, selfish and lustful. She tried to reconcile with the situation as it developed but failed. She writes about her husband's cruelty:

Winter came and one day while looking her in, he  
Noticed that the cat of sunshine was only a  
Line, a hair-thin line, and in the evening when  
He returned to take her out, she was a cold and

Half-dead women, now of no use at all to men  
(*The Descendants*,14)

This drain material relationship came under fire in  
the poem 'captive':

My love is a empty gift,  
a gilded empty container,  
good for , Nothing else  
(*Summer in Calcutta*)

Kamla Das searched for true love but she  
failed. Every time she gets only pain. Her aspiration  
for getting love has always been destroyed.  
Love's an itch

That's never reached (*Summer in Calcutta*,22)

Gauri Deshpande has an important position  
among the field of post-Feminist poets. Her poetry  
has proved to be a milestone in the history of Indian  
women's poetry. It is only Gauri Deshpande among  
all her contemporaries who draws our attention  
immediately. Most of her poems describe the theme  
of unfulfilled love and the longing for love In her  
poems the person and the poet are not different.  
Her hopeless attempts to search for genuine love  
are shown in all her poems. Women are more  
emotional and sentimental by temperament than  
men.

Her love poetry is different from the love  
poetry of other Indian poets; she has revived the  
tradition of love poetry by a contemporary new  
voice. There is revolution of experience of love.  
Though love is considered as giving eternal pleasure  
in some of her poems, but she seems to be quite  
aware of the dreams which shatter because of love:

Slightly unwelcome, taciturn, you  
moved in

And we lived on in disharmony,

Slowly, silently the green came into  
trees,

Your harsh eyes ate into the decay of  
my dreams

And the sound of your night pacing  
grew in my bloodstream. (*The Guest*)

Deshpande depicts the suffocation of  
marriage, and marital bliss in her poetry. In her  
poems she says woman has always been considered  
as a sexual object even in her marriage she finds her  
sexual object and her husband treats as he likes.

She feels sad because she realizes there is  
the failure of her relationship now. Her tone is full of  
sorrow. There are many poems which describe  
frustration with the concept of love, and natural  
images and symbols play an essential role in defining  
it. The poem "Summer" is a bitter, lyrical, and  
sentimental love poem which shows disillusionment.  
It reflects the strong desire and passion which the  
poet has yearned for. Her long waits have led to  
further worries:

While I wait with infinite patience  
The blooming of disenchantment. (*Lost Love*: 9).

Gauri Deshpande does not get any  
satisfaction from husband's love and it is her  
intense desire to be with the lover.

I walked home that evening

My shadow tossed back

and forth between the lampposts.

I reached home late, he waited anxiously.

What's the matter? Why do you look like that?

What that' was I never knew.

(*Poems in Winter*)

It makes her confused and restless that longing in  
her heart for the man who might have been her  
lover. All the moments the man who is not with her  
haunts her mind. The sense of loneliness and  
alienation leads to an empty space in her life. She  
puts on the light only to find an empty room, which  
makes her reaction more emotional.

Do I think of you

when I hear a step and put on the light

to find an empty room? (Do I think of you)

Sometimes love seems to give her endless  
satisfaction. In *There Was a Time* love gives her  
—priceless reward for a loveless past and an  
uncertain future. He writes:

And our solace

Will be: we knew

Of you and me. (*There Was a Time* 18-20)

Sometimes intensity of her love becomes painful  
because it involves almost useless attachment.

And attached by the same

Painful devotion and self-loss

To the feet of God

I'd be canonized; (*December*)

Love for a man is a temporary refuge from boredom and loneliness. For a woman love means complete emotional involvement. She wants a lasting and stable relationship with man. Man looks upon sex as a means of self-gratification and sensual pleasure whereas woman relates it to the emotional fulfillment and meaning in life. Gauri Deshpande expresses men do not penetrate into the plunging depths of women's souls /and bodies (*No More*3-4). In her *Re: Memories* there is much anguish and tears:

A stillness before sleep  
And an awareness in dreams.  
You should be left with a face at the window  
A heartbreak, a farewell.  
Otherwise there's nothing.

(*Re: Memories*)

Her treatment of love and sexuality shows how much she is dissatisfied with the society which demands silent acceptance from a woman. Though the poet doesn't become harsh like Mamta Kalia and Eunice de Souza who adopt an aggressive tone, yet she is quite aware of the worrying unrest of her life that gives her pain and suffering. She longs for a haven of peace:

I'm affected by a prowling unrest  
And know not what to do  
With my fists that clench and unclench  
Thoughts come pouring in my eyes  
And drain away leaving a whorl of dirt.

If only it'd rain  
If only I'd die

(*Integration*)

Gauri Deshpande frankly expresses her experiences of love and sexuality in the poem "On a Lost Love" by using earth and rain as metaphor to represent the act of consummation. She writes:

I am earth  
Vast deep and black  
And I receive  
Yellow daisies burst out  
On my breast and thigh  
At its every touch

(*On a Lost Love*)

Quest for love, find fulfillment in love in life, and their failure in relationship are basic theme in the poetry of Kamala Das and Gauri Deshpande .

Their poetry depicts deeply, an expression of feminine sensibility. They express their love yearnings, frustrations and dilemma. The subject of their work contains "woman" and the disclosure of female experiences, pain of unhappy marriage or humiliation of a desire less surrender. They study love from many angles in their poetry and their treatment of the theme is distinguished by increasing depth and intensity. They believe that love, for a woman is much more than what it is for a man. The difference in experience of love for man and woman is well put by Kamala:

.....In him.....the hungry haste  
Of rivers, in me..... the oceans' tireless  
Waiting. (An Introduction)

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