

Theme of Love in Kamala Das's Poetry

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Abstract—Love means a deep and enduring emotional regard, usually for another person. The theme of love has been a recurrent one in the history of literature. Love is an interesting subject in literature because love unlike other themes, has many twists and turns and many different ending. In Kamala Das's poetry also love is depicted through various aspects. This research is based on the various aspects of love depicted by Kamala Das in her poetry.

Das can be considered a poet of love. This love primarily comes from what it means to be a woman. Contrary to much of traditional Indian thought, Das revels in being a woman and the experiences of being a woman. She does not capitulate to the standard depictions of women as victims. Rather, she is able to assert a sense of identity that exists within women and one that gives voice to them. In poems as "The Looking Glass," Das takes the idea that women need to revel in what defines them: "The warm shock of menstrual blood" or "The musk of sweat between the breasts" are instances where being a woman is revered and vaulted. This might be one of many statements that Das is making about love. In praising being a woman, Das asserts that if one is to love, then there should be a complete immersion of one's identity and soul within it. This involves standing naked "in front of the glass" and bathing in what one is. There is a statement of love and affirmation here, which might be a part of Das' overall body of work.

Kamala Das (1934-2009) is one of the most distinctive and original of Indian poet's writing in English today. Her poetry is significantly love poetry. Man-woman relationship in her poetry is depicted on different levels i.e. Love, lust, physical nearness, frustration and disillusionment in love. She has surprised the critics with her frank depiction of man-woman love-lust relationship. Her poetry is replete with, "Shocking and unorthodox details about love marriage and sex." Keki Daruwalla discerns three constants in her poetry, "Skin's lazy hungers," "male indifference" and "female need for love". She seems to be a prisoner of her own passions and prejudices and her "Confessional madness" reveals her to be a capture of love and sex, glorifying her unorthodox views. Her heart longs for love but gets only lust from the male partner and thus it is filled with frustration.

Kamala Das writes in her autobiography 'My life', "Love has a beginning and an end, but lust has no such faults. I needed security. I needed permanence, I needed two strong arms thrown around my shoulders and a soft voice in my ear. Physical integrity must carry with it a certain pride that is a burden to the soul. Perhaps it was necessary for my body to defile itself in many ways, so that the sound turned humble for a change."

She longs for love in its sublime form and is disgusted with skin's lazy hungers. Man can only excite physical pleasure and the heart remains empty cistern.

"The heart
An empty cistern waiting
Through long hours, fills itself
With coiling snakes of silence.....
I am a freak. It's only
To save my face. I flaunt at
Times, a grand, Flamboyant lust"

The Sun Shine cat depicts the miserable condition of the poet because she had failed in her search for true elevated love. She feels the suffocation with her husband who neither loved nor used her. She becomes promiscuous but turns hysteric when her lovers deny love saying.

"I do not love, I cannot love,
It is not in my nature to love"

She wants to forget herself in love which might transform her into a new being but society punishes her for demanding freedom. She is declared insane and imprisoned herself in tears till.

"The returned to take her out, she was a cold and
Half-dead woman, now of no use at all to men".

Her experiences in love and marriage become traumatic which only intensifies the identity crisis in her feminine self. The 'cat' her feminine self-realises that she is nothing but an object of mistrust and humiliation at the hands of her own man. This deep rooted anguish of herself surfaces in many of her poems.

The poet's search for love continues in The Looking Glass. She knows that she can easily get a lover by admiring his superiority and offering him all the feminine gifts of the scent of long hairs, the musk of sweat between the breasts and all female hungers. The lover vanishes and her vain search among, strangers leave her "drab and destitute".

"His last voice calling out your name and your,
Body which once under his touch her gleamed
Like burnished brass now drab and destitute."

The woman in The Invitation has had a taste of paradise from man. The lover comes to her at intervals like a fish coming up for air. Then he is gone for good but she waits for him and lives in the memories.

"On the bed with him, the boundaries of Paradise had shrunk to a mere six by two had afterword's, when we walked, out together they".

In her bleak poem, In Love, Kamala Das describes her relationship with her lover, which is based on physical coupling. She experiences her body as scorched and consumed by her lover in unpleasant ways: his kisses are like the "burning mouth" of the sun (she repeats "burning" twice in the opening) and her lover's "limbs" like "carnivorous plants" reaching out to devour her. Neither image is pleasant or inviting. She calls her "lust" a sad "lie": in her imagery she

appears consumed rather than fulfilled; she realizes this relationship is not what she would like it to be.

Yet she admits that while her mind is "moody," not happy with the mere bodily component of her relationship, there is a certain "pleasure" in the physical relationship: she calls it "deliberate gaiety" but at the same time undercuts the idea of pleasure with her image of it as "harshly" trumpeting into the room.

Her imagery continues to convey the destructive quality of her relationship: all around her is a malevolent world. Crows fly like "poison," she hears the cries of "corpse bearers," her nights are "moonless" and she is "sleepless." She questions this "skin communicated thing" that she can't call, at least in her lover's presence, love.

The poem shows the dehumanization of the decoupling of love and lust as the narrator experiences it. The narrator would like more than the bodily relationship that leaves her feeling used up, moody and despondent. What she has makes her feel, by implication, poisoned and corpse-like. At the same time, she is afraid to bring up the idea of love "yet" to her partner. The word "yet" is possibly the most poignant word in this poem: despite the bleakness the narrator experiences in her relationship and despite her seeming inability to talk to her lover and express her feelings, she still ("yet") longs for the lust to transfigure into love.

In the poem "Gino" she expresses her consciousness of identity as a woman. The poem begins with a note of fear and warning. Here she compares a lover's Kiss to a Krait bite which fills the blood stream with its accused essence. According to him lover are reptiles who keep sucking the female blood. She discovers that the body she wears is without joy.

The body I were without joy Shall wither with My darling's impersonal lust.

Quest for love, or rather the failure to find emotion fulfillment through love is the central theme of love outside marriage. She is not actually propagating adultery and infidelity, but merely searching for a relationship which gives both love and security. That is why she sometimes gives a mythical frame work to her search for true love, and identifies it with the Radha Krishna myth or with Mira Bai's relinquishing of the ties of marriage in search of Lord Krishna, the true love.

"Virndavan lives on in every woman mind,
And the flute luring her
From home and her husband."

She does not advocate promiscuity her love poetry merely voices her life long. Yearning for fulfillment through love.

Each of Kamala's love relationships has proved lurid and rootless. Each of these relationships brings to her again and again only the vacant ecstasy of the dancing Eunuchs. Sex is no more than a "mindless surrender" or a heartless participation and therefore not a "humming fiesta". The genesis of almost all her poems is this conflict coursing from the desperate involvements of herself and her dejections. Suffering leads her to seek peace in another's arm to knock at another's door. But such experiments often and as tiresome physiological function of see in which only the flesh lazily

joins and bones remain pristine love without achieving consummation remains a skin-communication thing.

Kamala Das ultimate vision of love forms the central core of her poetry. In her own words "Love is beautiful what ever four lettered name the puritans call it by. It is the foretaste of Paradise. It is the only pastime that involves the soul". Das is a poet neither of sensuality nor of promiscuity. It would be more sensible to say that she is guilty of extraordinary candor she is too honest to be hypocritical.

Love is the main theme in the poem of Kamala Das and all other themes are related with it. She confesses everything from her marriage to extra marital affairs. She considers physical love as a step for the realization of true love. For her love is emotional-cum spiritual relationship. It is a relationship based on mutual understanding between two people, who have respect for each other feelings. She also does not oppose to extra marital relationship which victimized women at the hands of their husband.

So, it can be seen in her poems that her quest for true love has ended in frustration and discontentment. Her poetry reflects her own self with a powerful force of protest against the male dominated society. Her poems show her failure in love and voice of the victimized women of the world. According to her love must lead to self-realization and self-growth. It is pure love that satisfies her romantic aspiration and emotional need.

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