

Analysis of the element of Confession in Kamala Das' poetry.

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Abstract

Kamala Das is a modern Indian poet who emphasises on various issues relating to modern society and its impacts on her life. This paper will try to shed light on how Kamala Das made the use of confessional technique in her poems to express her personal experiences to offer a critique of the contemporary society. This paper will attempt to show Kamala Das frankness and condor in the treatment of a subject, with reference to some of her poems like; AnIntroduction, My Grandmother's House, The Suicide and The Old Play House.

Keywords: Confession, Criticism, Oppression, Marriage

The confessionalism is a poetic device, used by poets to reveal extremely confidential and private matters of their lives. In the second half of the twentieth century, a group of American poets started writing on a highly subjective matter. This group of poets includes Robert Lowell, John Barryman, W.D Snodgrass, Theodore Roethke, Sylvia Plath, and Anne Sexton, who gives expression of personality without any escape in their poems. This group establishes the confessional pattern in poetry.

There were poets from India like MamtaKalia, Eunice de Souza, MalanieSilgardoetc, who took up this confessional pattern of poetry. Among these writers Kamala Das excels the position. She started writing in open form and in open language. Her poetry displays her courage to criticize the traditional bound conservative society which was harsh on her unconventional life style. She is a confessional writer also in the sense that she brings awareness to her female counterparts about their dormant sexual desires and their unfulfilled sexual relation with their husbands which they try to suppress for fear of societal censurë. As a good confessional writer, she writes about subjects which are considered as a taboo for a woman, like speaking about sexual acts, sexual desires, description of private body parts, extramarital affairs and the like.

She confesses a lot of things about herself. She celebrates the body and is not ashamed of its needs. She is not comfortable with the patriarchal system, which refuses to give women space and fixes to roles of a good daughter or a good wife or a good mother.

What leads Kamala Das to adopt the confessional mode of writing? She thought herself to be a victim of male dominated society. Having personally experienced husband's ill treatment of her, she could not help giving vent to her grievances in her poems. Her confessional writing has a therapeutic effect on her as it is written when the writer undergoes intense grief or resentment from which she would like to get relief. Her poetry is largely confessional and autobiographical in that the most important concern of her as a poet is sexual frustration and

failure of marriage. In her early life, Kamala Das had a negative effect due to her mother's unsuccessful relationship with her father. Kamala Das get married at the age of fifteen to K. Mohan das, but like her parents' unsuccessful relationship she too ended up with an unsuccessful relationship.

The failure of her marriage has most vividly been described in the poem untitled "The Old Play House". In this poem, we find her depressed psychology, that is ; -

“There is

No more singing, no more dance,

my mind is an old

Playhouse with all its lights

put out....”

(The Old Play House , 23-25)

Whereby the mind of the poet pervades with darkness, when the lights of love is putout. Here the darkness is referring to gloominess. The life of the poet is how deprived of all the delightful aspects like singing, dancing and all, what remains is just the sense of lacking which the poet compares to a dark old playhouse.

She shows her concern regarding child marriage, as she herself got married at the early age of fifteen. She talks of the objectification of women in this power relationship. In her poem. entitled "An Introduction", there is the expression of strong criticism of child marriage. It is a self-reflective and in a confessional tones whereby there is a strong remark on patriarchal society prevalent today and the sufferings of failure sex. The poet expresses in this poem how she as a girl child was pushed into marriage and was left to carry all the burdens which crushed her childhood. The poet says,

"..I was child and later they

Told me I grew, for I become tall

my limbs Swelled and one or two places

Sprouted hair...

("An Introduction", 24-26)

She was a child but people told her that she had grown up just because her body had started. showing signs of puberty. Whereas the fact is that she was still a child at heart. She was unable to understand such interpretations of people. The poet again says;

"...when I asked for love, not

Knowing what else to ask

For, he drew a youth of

Six-teen

into the bedroom and closed the door,

he did not beat me But my sad

Woman body felt so beaten....."

("An Introduction"; 27-31)

From these lines it can be well discern, how Kamala Das criticizes the exploitation of woman body in the bondage of marriage.

As a confessional poet, she mostly confines herself to the concerns of her own experience. The sense of decay and death, longing for past days are very much prevalent in her poem "My Grandmother's House". As a grown up woman, she feels the lack of love in her

relationship with her husband, the poet seeks to take refuge in memories of childhood days when she had spent time with her grandmother and shares everything with her. The poet writes,

“There is a house now far away where,
Once I received love
That woman died.....

("My Grandmother's House", 01-03)

With the death of her grandmother, the poet feels the element of love has also left her. She is no longer happy as she used to be with her Grandmother. She is no more receiving love. Now she has to search for love with strangers;

“..I who have lost
My way and beg now at stranger's doors to
Receive love, at least in small change?"

("My Grandmother's House", 18-20)

This again indicates to her unfulfilled relationship with her husband, as a result of which she gets into love affairs with other men to get pure love. She herself boldly reveals about her . affairs in her autobiography "My Story".

Similarly, the death element also can be found in the poem "The Suicide", where the poet expresses her desire to die when she is unable to find true love. She says;

“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.....

("The Suicide", 31-39)

In her poems, Kamala Das discloses her feelings as a wife, lover, granddaughter and above all a fellow being to thousands of suffering human beings. She is courageous enough to confess the "self as a poetic symbol. Because of this trek in her poetry and other writings controversies became the constant companion of her poetic achievements. She expresses the vehemence of her emotions and her resentments. She made her poetry as a vehicle; to express her resentments against male dominated society, and her bitter experiences of life. She therefore, strives to establish her identity as a woman through her poems and stands out as a revolutionary poet.

References

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