

KAMALA DAS AS A POET

INTRODUCTION: Kamala Das is a very popular Indo- Anglican poet. Her poetry is confessional and autobiographical. It is the poetry of introspection and self-analysis. Here we find the best expression of feminine sensibility. The poet expresses her need for love with astonishing frankness and openness.

AS A CONFESSIONAL POET: Kamala Das is a confessional poet. In this context she can be compared with Ramanujan, Ezekiel, R. Lowell, Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath and J. Wright. As a true confessional poet she takes her readers into confidence about her private life. She shows with remarkable frankness the wrongs, injustice and the humiliation that she suffered in a male dominant world. She has candidly described her traumatic experiences of lovemaking and of the sexual act. We can easily find the tone of confession in her poems like 'The Sunshine Cat', 'The Invitation', and 'The Looking Glass'. In 'The Invitation' she has shamelessly described her sexual experience:

I want no other
On the bed with him, the boundaries of
Paradise had shrunk to a mere
Six by two and afterwards . . .

FRUSTRATION IN LOVE: Kamala Das is a poet of love and sexual relationship. Love and sex form the main theme in her poetry. Her poetry is largely an expression of her frustration in love. She always speaks of her unfulfilled love and expresses her need for love. In 'The Sunshine Cat' the poet abuses her husband because he never loved her and never used her properly. She calls him a selfish and cowardly man who was a ruthless watcher of her sexual act with other men. This frustration of her love boils over in poems like 'The Invitation' and 'The Looking Glass'.

TREATMENT OF SEX: In fact, the poetry of Kamala Das is devoted to her confessions of her sex life. Sexual humiliation becomes a central theme in her poetry. She goes to the extreme in her frank treatment of sex. In 'The Looking Glass' she says:

Gift him all,
Gift him what makes you woman, the scent of
Long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts,
The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your
Endless female hungers.

Kamala Das has added a new dimension to the poetry of love and sex. Her frank admission and bold treatment of her private life make her a great confessional poet. In this context she can be compared with Gauri Deshpande.

AS A POET OF PROTEST: Kamala is a poet of protest also. She rebels against the conventions, traditions and accepted norms of society. Her protest is directed against injustices and exploitation. She made her poetry a vehicle for the expression of her resentments against male domination over women. In 'The Sunshine Cat' she writes in a strong tone of protest:

Being selfish
And a coward, the husband who neither loved nor

Used her, but was a ruthless watcher.....

FEMININE SENSIBILITY: Kamala Das's poetry is a frank and straightforward expression of feminine sensibility. She revolts against the exploitation of women. She expresses anger against the male dominance in the society. She attempted to establish her identity as women through her poems. At the same time she tried to impart an identity to Indian women. Thus her poetry signals the advent of new phenomenon in Indo- Anglican poetry.

POETIC STYLE: Kamala Das's command over the English language is remarkable. She cultivated a style that is characterized by colloquial simplicity and clarity. Her poetry reveals a mastery of phrase and control over rhythm. In the choice of words, Kamala Das exercises a special care. The words effortlessly come to her and become one with emotion. She is a poet in the confessional mode. Thus her diction is most often colloquial. Her poetry abounds in imagery. Her images are suggestive and functional. She offers imagery in dealing with her favourite subjects like love and sex. Thus it is not boring and monotonous.

CONCLUSION: Thus Kamala Das is a great poet. She directed the path of women poets in modern English poetry. She has certainly made a name for herself by virtue of her craftsmanship. No doubt, her poetry is autobiographical and confessional. She reminds us of Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath. The charge of obscurity and obsession with sex is groundless. Being a confessional poet, she expresses her own emotions.

THE ABOVE MATERIAL HAS BEEN COMPILED FROM DIFFERENT OPEN SOURCES.