iJRASET
International Journal For Research in Applied Science and Engineering Technology



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH

IN APPLIED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

Volume: 12 **Issue:** IV **Month of publication:** April 2024

DOI: https://doi.org/10.22214/ijraset.2024.61063

www.ijraset.com

Call: 08813907089 | E-mail ID: ijraset@gmail.com

International Journal for Research in Applied Science & Engineering Technology (IJRASET)
ISSN: 2321-9653; IC Value: 45.98; SJ Impact Factor: 7.538
Volume 12 Issue IV Apr 2024- Available at www.ijraset.com

Kamala Das: A Confessional Poet

Dr. Vijay S. Ganvir
Department of English, Arts & Commerce Degree College, Petrolpump, Jawaharnagar Dist. Bhandara (M.S.)441906

Abstract: ***Kamala Das is a great female poet in contemporary Indo-Anglian Literature. Her poetry has been considered as a confessional poetry because it is a record of her individual experiences. The autobiographical elements strongly determine the tone and the contents of her poems. This paper aims to note the confessional mode in Das's poetry. In exploring personal relationship, Kamala Das broods and always her eye is focused on the pathos of her own predicament. She depicted every personal experience, feelings in her poems which are universal. She raises her voice against patriarchal culture and religious orthodoxy for the modern woman's voice who wants to be free from all the obstacles, restrictions of Indian society. The reading of the poems of Kamala Das make it very much clear that she writes her ideas very frankly, candidly and in an outspoken way breaking the restrictions of the strong edifice of social code. Her poetry revolves around an axis of feelings which brings her closer to the realm of experimental reality within. She raises her confessional and traits to the level of a specific universal appeal. The struggle of self ultimately becomes the struggle of all mankind.***

Keywords: confessional poetry, autobiographical elements, predicament, patriarchal culture, religious orthodoxy, social code

I. INTRODUCTION

Kamala Das's pen name was Madhavikkutty, born at Punnayurkulam, Thrissur District in Kerala in 1934. She has created a permanent place in the contemporary Indo-Anglian poetry. She was major Indian English poet and Malayalam author. She converted into Islam and changed her name as Kamala Surayya. She is the recipient of several prizes and awards. To name a few, P.E.N.'S Asian Poetry Prize, in 1963. She has won Kerala Sahitya Academy Award in 1969 and Sahitya Academy Award in 1985. She has nominated and shortlisted for Nobel Prize for literature in 1984. In 2009, The Times called her The mother of modern English Indian Poetry. Her poetical collection includes 'Summer in Calcutta' 1965, 'The Descendants' 1967, 'The old Playhouse and other poems' 1973, 'Collected poems I' 1984, 'The best of Kamala Da' 1991 and 'Only the Soul Knows How to Sing' 1996.

Kamala Das writes with a frankness and openness unusual in the Indian context. Her candor her experience in creative and in evaluating manner as compare to another Indian poet in English. She exploit the confessional mode of poetry as American confessional poets such as Sylvia Plath and Anne Saxton to discover the various images which evoke the joy and frustration of achieved womanhood. Confessional poetry became popular in 1950s and 1960s. It reveal an author's repressed anguish or deepest emotion, the psyche and personal trauma including interdicted matter such as mental illness, sexuality and suicide. Confessional poetry is a mode of modern poetry. It is autobiographical mode of verse. Confessional poetry has a very long tradition which begins from the poets like Sappho and Catullus to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's 'The confession based on religious confessions.'

Kamala Das had an unhappy, dissatisfied life even from her childhood. She was a victim of patriarchal prejudices and discriminations as most women are. In her autobiographical book 'My Story', her 'father was an autocrat' (91) and her mother vague and indifferent' (20). Her parents consider her as 'a burden and responsibility' and she was given in marriage to a relative when she was only a school girl. (82). Thus she was compelled to become a premature wife and mother. She complains about it in her poem" Of Calcutta" as follows:

I was sent away, to protect a family's
Honour, to save a few cowards, to defend some
Abstraction, sent to another city to be
A relative's wife.

In the same poem she present the image of a doll to portray a woman's miserable condition:

Yet another nodding
Doll for his parlour, a walkie-talkie one to
Warm his bed at night.

©IJRASET: All Rights are Reserved

The indifference of man to woman's miseries is depicted in her poem" The Stone Age". The exhibit the pathos of woman in male dominated society. Their life is nothing but stone. She expresses in the following lines:

You turn me into a bird of stone,
a granite dove,
you build round me a shabby drawing room
and strike my face absent mindedly while you read.

When Kamala Das understood that love and matrimony are poles apart, she searched for a lover. Her lover is incapable of giving her a blissful experience. Thus her frustration is expressed through her poem "The Freak" in the following lines:

…. Can this man with
Nimble finger-tips unleash
Nothing more alive than the
Skin's lazy hungers?

The speaker here is not satisfied with her lover for some reason. Perhaps she is not getting what she expected from this extra-marital affair. So, she says, it is nothing more than the skin's lazy hunger.

"The Old Play House" also voices her protest against the male domination and the resultant humiliation of women. The speaker here is very much rebellious in exhibiting her anguish against the supremacy and monopoly. It is expressed in the following words:

…… Cowering
Beneath your monstrous ego I ate the magic loaf and
Because a dwarf. I lost my will and reason, to all your
Questions I mumbled incoherent replies…

Kamala Das in many of her poems disclosed the dark reality behind the curtain of caring and protecting women in our society. The plight of a married woman, their existence, rights, exploitation and overall situation appears in totality. They are chained to their husband's house is depicted in the opening lines of the poem "The Old Play House".:

You planned to tame a swallow, to hold her
In the long summer of your love so that she would forget
Not the raw seasons alone, and the homes left behind, but
Also her nature, the urge to fly, and the endless
Pathways of the sky…..

Kamala Das is bold enough and considerate to refuse what she don't like or prefer. She openly refuses and hates traditional sex roles assigned to women by the patriarchy as depicted in the poem "Introduction":

…. Then I wore a shirt
And a black sarong, cut my hair short and ignored all of
This womanliness. Dress in sarees, be girl or be wife,
They cried. Be embroiderer, cook or a quarreler
With servants.

Kamala Das is exclusively concerned with the personal experience of love in her poetry. For Das ideal love is the fulfilment of the levels of body and mind. It is the experience beyond sex through sex. The tragic failure to get love in terms of sexual-spiritual fulfilment from the husband, leads her to search for it elsewhere. Each relationship only intensifies her disappointment faced with the sense of absolute frustration and loneliness. Though she seeks the perfection of masculine being in every lover, it ends in failure because of the impossibility of realizing this ideal in human form. The experience of frustration sets the psyche in the attitude of rebellion. Every confessional poet writes about death, disease, destruction, unhappy, far-off things, takes personal failures. Kamala Das writes about private humiliations, suffering and shares her experiences. She pays the public attention into private by expressing her private feelings of love, spirituality and sex which earned her name as The Queen of Erotica. Her poems show that every woman who seeks loves and experiences her endless female hunger. In her poem, The Looking Glass, she urges woman to give the man she loves, everything that makes her woman:

"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."

The female persona has been depicted in her poems yearns for pleasure and emotional warmth beyond sexual gratification. She thought about herself as a victim of male dominated society that attitude towards Indian women is like nothing for good. She expresses her grievances and her emotions in her poems. She expresses her grudge against her husband because of her sad and bitter experiences of her sexual relationship with various men. She tried to establish her identity to Indian woman as a neglected class of Indian society.

" You let me use my youth like coins,
into various hands,
you let me mate with shadows,
you let me sing in empty shrines,
you let your wife, seek ecstasy in other's arms." (A Man in a Season)

She devoid emotional attachment from her husband that's why she keeps relationship with many unknown person to get marital life, so she expresses her view in a melancholic manner:

"I who have lost my ways and beg now at strangers' doors to receive love,
at least in small changes?" (My Grandmother's House)

Kamala Das is a typical poet who pours her heart into her poetry. She is subjective and autobiographical anguish and psyche who gives us reliable poetic voice has been heard in contemporary Indo-English verse at long last. She aware of the self and quest for true love and expresses her private experiences in matter of sex and love. In *The Looking Glass*, she deals with the alienation and suffering of woman in the hands of the man. She also utters sense of despair and dejection caused man's dominance and exploitation. So she expresses in the very beginning of the poem:

" Getting a man to love you is easy only be honest about your wants as
Women stand nude before the glass with him so that he sees himself the
stronger one."

She describes all these things without any hesitation about man's limb and his way of urinating, the picture of breast and shock of the menstrual blood. She says that how love is the essence of human life and existence. Her aim as a poet is to underline the predicament of contemporary women plagued by the crisis of divided selves. She wants to bring harmony out of this existence. Her poems are remarkable because they reveal her feelings of anxiety, alienation, meaninglessness, and futility, acute sense of isolation, fragmentation and loss of identity. Modern Indian woman's ambivalence is presented through her poems. She seems to have a good deal of the conventional woman in her. She seems to have the combination in herself to have a wish for domestic security and the desire for independence. Her poems describe a longing for a man to fill her dreams with love.

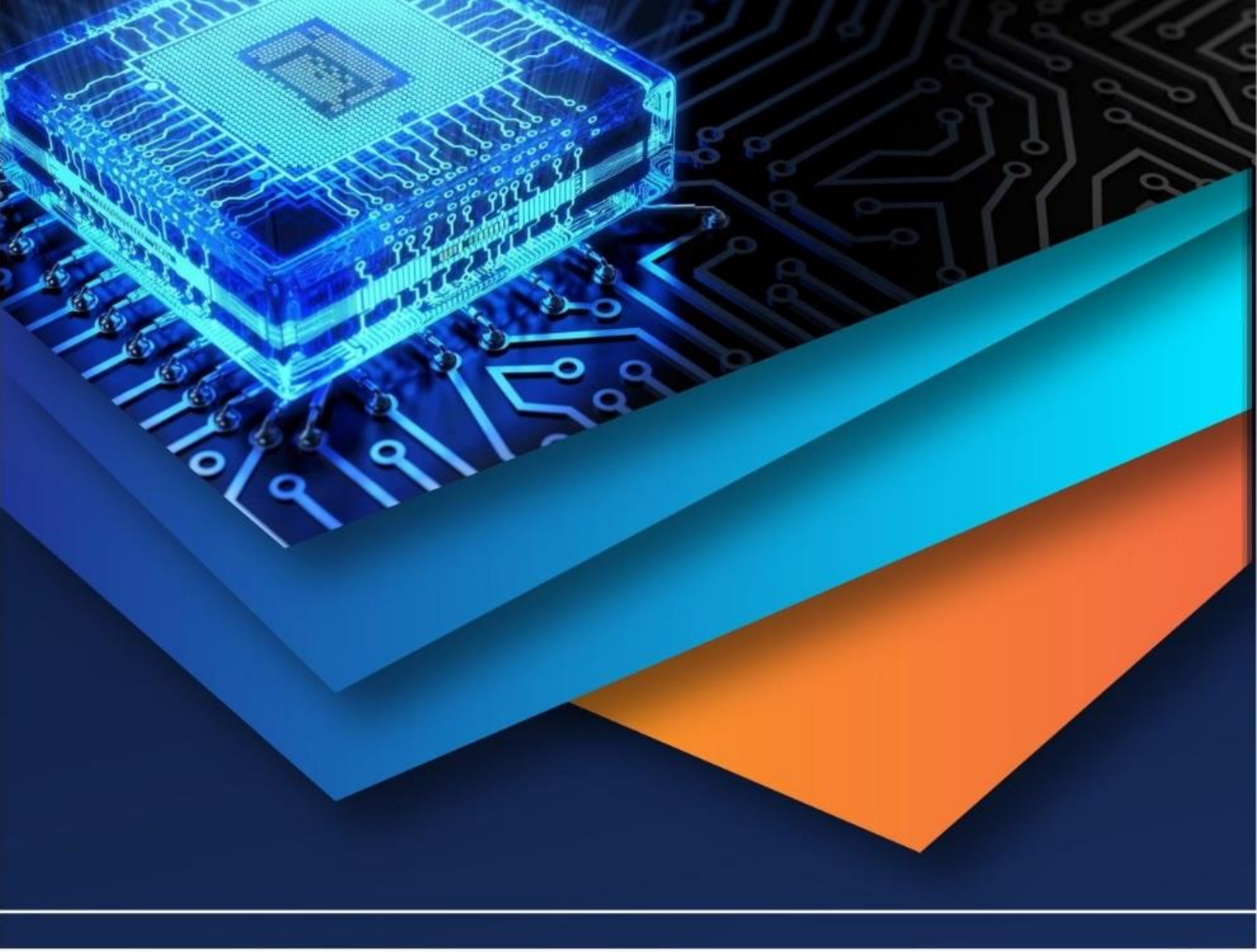
II. CONCLUSION

Kamala Das's poems are perfectly emblem of confessional poetic element. She writes frankly, candidly and in an outspoken manner and confesses and probe her own female psyche and herself through her poetry. Her contribution to the confessional voice at Indo-English women poets cannot be overemphasized. She is herself priest and confession, sinner and saint, beloved and betrayed. She presented each expression in a very healthy manner. Her blatant boldness of expression forced critics to consider her as a confessional poetess. She gained quite reputation for not just her personal poems but her open minded and straight forward nature. She raises her confessional traits to the level of a specific universal appeal. The struggle of herself ultimately becomes the struggle of all mankind, and herein lies her specialty, a matter to achieve some sort of victory over pain and defeat.

REFERENCES

[1] Das, Kamala. The Best of Kamala Das. Ed. P.P.Raveendran. Calicut: Bodhi Publishing House, 1991. Print.
[2] Naik, M.K.: A History of Indian English Literature, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1989.
[3] I.K.Sharma: The Irony of Six : A Study of Kamala Das's Poetry, Ed. Contemporary Indian Poetry, Prakash Book Depot, Bareilly, 1986.
[4] O.J.Thomas: Kamala Das: A Search for Home, Companionship and Love, The Quest, Vol. V, June 1991.
[5] Ramchandran, R. The Poetry of Kamala Das, New Delhi: Rehana Publishing, 1993.98. Print.
[6] Rmkrishna, E.V. Kamala Das as a Confessional Poet, The Journal of Indian Writing in English, Vol.5, No. 1, Jan, 1970. Print.
[7] K.R. Srinivas Iyangar, Indian Writing in English, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1985.
[8] Rabert Philips : The Confessional Poets, 1973.
[9] Das, Kamala. Only The Soul Knows How to Sing, D.C.Books, Kerala, 1996.

©IJRASET: All Rights are Reserved | SJ Impact Factor 7.538 | ISRA Journal Impact Factor 7.894 |



10.22214/IJRASET

45.98

IMPACT FACTOR: 7.129

IMPACT FACTOR: 7.429

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH

IN APPLIED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

Call : 08813907089 (24*7 Support on Whatsapp)