

The Treatment of Love and Lust in Kamala Das's Poetry

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Abstract

Love and lust are the universal phenomena in the process of procreation in human life. The unification of two souls into one is the fore-point in marriage life. Instead of receiving hearty treatment, Kamala Das experienced a pretension in love from her husband side both physically and mentally that is what she tries to universalize through her poems. Her poems concerning with love and lust vindicate the message to the male community to treat the mother class not simply as an object of lust but to consider them as life partner to the real sense of the term. Mutual understanding between husband and wife is must in generating a healthy generation as well as a happy home. The present research work has been penned down in the light of her poems related with marriage, love and lust.

Keywords: Love, lust, frustration, shatter, gratification, humiliation, monstrous, exploitation.

Love, the living spirit behind the existence of all species of the universe, is treated in a particular way by Kamala Das. She is pre-eminently a poet of love, sex and lust, the nervousness, melancholy and frustration. Love, the hunger of the flesh hurts, which turned to be an agency of dissatisfaction. The function of hearty love between husband and wife, lover and beloved does not work here. The type of frustration suffered by the poet gives birth to tension which torments her psychologically.

Her ultimate vision of love forms the central core of her poetry. In her own words:

“Love is beautiful whatever four lettered name. The Puritans call it by. It is the foretaste of Paradise. It is the only pastime that involves the soul.”

Her persona no doubt is given to small hungers and suffers the tragic protagonists the catastrophe inflicted upon them by their own doings. Kamala's own disgust and failures led her to a frantic search for the mythic 'Krish', the ideal lover, in whom she could establish eternal bond. This search made her aware of the need to study all men: all at once the plot thickened with a researcher's hunger for knowledge, I studied all men.”

Since the quest has by and large, failed in her case, sex is no more than a “mindless surrender” or a heartless participation not a “humming fiesta.” Without emotional involvement, sex is barren and sterile for her. The charge of lustfulness and obscenity as is applied, in her case by some critics can therefore not be maintained. Her quest for spiritual gratification has been shattered. A close analysis of the following poems will flash a vague light from the inner core of her hungry heart:

‘The looking Glass’ explores her personal relationship that she wishes to develop with the lover through sex. She left no stone unturned to satisfy her husband even by praising his masculinity and accepting her own feminine weakness. Her husband's male ego was to gratify from her ends without displaying any emotional touch from his husband's end. She is supposed here, no better than a puppet, a play thing whose only aim is to gratify male lust. Kamala Das has universalized the personal as the female persona in every woman and the man is every man. The poem offers some tips to women for sucking maximum possible pleasures out of sexual experiences. A woman should make her body naked and stand before a mirror and ask her partner to do the same. She should not feel shy to praise his male -organ:

Stand nude before the glass with him So that he sees himself the stronger one

And believes it so, and you so much more Softer, Younger, lovelierAdmit you Admiration. Notice the perfection.

Of his limbs, his eyes reddening under

The shower, the shy walk across the bath room floor Dropping towels, and the jerky way he

Urinate. All the fond details that make Him male and your only man.

She suggests the woman to surrender her chastity, beauty, youth, grace, delicacy, hair, breast and above all her private parts to the superior male.

Gift him all

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

All her womanly possessions are laid bare at the disposal of the lover's lust. But the sense of loss and dispossession of lover with whom a woman enjoys sex deserts her. She leaves nothing to gift her lover .She is hypnotized and is convinced to play the game of love whole heartedly but in return she suffers from humiliation, frustration and tension. She is emotionally involved in sex act while for the man it is merely momentary skin communicated pleasures.

Tension, frustration and disillusionment are the unsolved factors in her world. Her emotional physical relation is imprinted on her mind which does not get any substitute to give her the same sexual pleasure that she experienced with him .An echo of lover's voice calling over her name is always heard by her. Her body becomes lustrous while lying in bed with him becomes dull insipid and unattractive.

Oh yes, getting

A man to love is easy, but living Without him afterwards may have to be

Faced.A living without life when you move Around, meeting strangers, with your eyes that Gave up their search, with ears that hear only His last voice calling out your name and you Body which once under his touch had gleamed Like burnished brush, now drab and destitute.

She hankers after emotional love that makes her a pilgrim, she is on the path of love, meets the lover and drives pleasure mentally through sexual devotion with eyes shut to relieve her but as soon as she opens her eyes she finds her lover missing Venugopal affirms, "The poetry of Kamala Das is full of questions that are rarely answered. They are queries about truth. But, truth, in general is unbearable. And Kamala Das, the seeker after truth feels betrayed."

Kamala Das wishes to forget the bitter memory of her sexual frustration and in order to relieve from the tension she thinks of drug like luminol for peace. In the poem "Luminol" she gives an outlet to her feelings:

Love - lorn It is only

Wise at times, to let sleep Make holes in memory

... The souls mute

Arena

That silent sleep inside your sleep.

The exchange of love is emotional and its living abode is the self, not the body. The body arouses the lust. The role of a love maker is genuinely taken by her as the lover who draws her towards him rudely causing much pain to her drew her to him rudely

With a lovers haste, an armful Of splinters, designed to hurt and Pregnant with pain. (Glass)

Her frustration begets tension that is visible when she calls herself as a glass that can be shattered because of her fragility. As we find in the poem Glass.

I went to him for half an hour As pure woman, pure misery Fragile glass, breaking Crumbling

Tension between love and lust brings more from her marriage life itself. She is married at the age of 15 to K. Madhava Das. The type of love she longs for has not been reciprocated by her husband but instead of it she faces sexual punishment, exploitation and better embarrassment in sex encounter with her husband.

When I asked for love, not knowing what else to

For, he drew a youth of sixteen into the Bedroom and closed the door. He did not bear me. But my sad women badly felt so beaten . The weight of my breasts and womb crushed me I

Shrank

Pitifully. Then

The old playhouse' reflects the female persona's unbearable, dissatisfactory, unspeakable and unaccepted conjugal life with her husband who kept her under his control robbing her individuality and denying her basic human rights. She depicts herself in the following words :

You called me wife,

I was taught to break saccharin into your tea and

To offer at the right moment the vitamins. Cowering Beneath your monstrous ego I ate the magic loaf and Became a dwarf. I lost my will and reason to all your Questions I mumbled incoherent replies.

Joya Chakravarty says about the relationship of Kamala Das and her husband stating, "Her husband was interested in sex, she sought companionship- The result was a hollow union."

You were pleased

With my body's response, its weather, its

Usual shallow convulsions... you embalmed

My poor lust with your sweet bitter juices

In composition the pangs of women are generalized giving a unified echo:

What I am able to give

Is only what your wife is qualified To give

We are all alike We woman

In our wrappings of hairless skin.

Kamala Das expresses her inner cry and disappointment over her marital relation with an indifferent man who betrayed her in every possible way. The poem Relationship is a living example of her despondency.

Betray me

Yes ,he can, but never physically; Only with words.... While

My body's wisdom tells and tells again

That is shall find my rest, my sleep, my place And even death nowhere else but here in

My betrayer's arms.....

She is devoid of gratification even in his poem In Love where the female persona is disgusted with the man who uses her body ignoring her emotional love for which she is always hungry. The man makes himself satisfied by sucking her youthly juice .The female persona hates this attitude and states the following lines hatefully:

Of what does the burning mouth Of sun is burning in to days

Sky remind me oh, yes his Month, and.. his limbs like pale and Carnivorous plants reaching

Out for me, and the sad lie Of my unending lust.

To conclude, Kamala Das's versatile genius and expression in speaking unspoken truth of the suffering of woman are as old as the hills and have been felt across time. In the field of true love, tension should not find a room to play its part as true love is the prime concern for human dignity and identity and wilderment is simply unbearable. The poems discussed above are the strong advocacy of the poet in favour of the mother class in India.

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