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Confessional elements in Kamala Das' poetry

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Abstract

Kamala Das is one of the most prominent and towering personalities among the Indian writers. In her poetry, she deals with her personal experiences which are expressed through a powerful mode of poetry known as confessional poetry which is a mean to get therapeutic consolation. How the poet explores her personal emotions and feelings associated with her marriage life is the crux of the present paper. Besides it, it also throws light on the fact how females suffer at the hands of male-dominated society or patriarchal set-up of environment in a typical orthodox society.

Keywords: Emotions, maltreatment, frank, relationship, confessional

Introduction

There is no doubt that Kamala Das has been hailed as a poet who writes in a confessional manner. Confessional mode of poetry enables a poet to express his or her personal emotions and feelings in a bold and frank manner. As far as Kamala Das' poetry is concerned, without any shadow of doubt, it discussed and deals with the poet's self-analysis as well as with atone of sincerity. What a confessional poet deals with is the psychological equivalent for his or her mental state. It is such psychological equivalents that we get in the poetry of Kamala Das. She can be compared to such confessional poets like Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton.

It is an established fact that in her poetry, Kamala Das always deals with private humiliations and sufferings which are the stock themes in confessional poetry. Kamala Das treats the most intimate experiences without being sentimental or having any traits of pathos. Her frank admission and bold treatment of private life are perfectly in keeping with the nature and themes of confessional poetry.

In her poetry, no doubt, Kamala Das is primarily concerned with herself as a victim. Sexual humiliations become a central experience in her life. She has much to confess in her poetry and does it without any inhibitions and in the most candid manner. Kamala Das' confessions pertain to her role as a wife, as a mistress to many men and as a mother. Her poetry is a confession of her relationships with her husband, and of her extra-marital sexual relationships. The most recurrent themes dealt by her are the themes of love, lust, and marriage. In dealing with these themes, she hides nothing, and an orthodox reader would accuse Kamala Das of being shameless in her use of the language through which she reveals the secrets of her private life.

In her most important poem, *The Freaks*, Kamala Das describes a sexual experience and the feelings accompanied it. Her feelings were ambivalent when she was lying in her bed with a man. She did experience the gratification of her sexual desires, but she felt disappointed by the lack of love for her in his heart. She felt his fingers moving upon her body nimbly enough, but not with the passion which would arouse in her the desire for an emotional union. She is so frank in expressing her feelings in a frank and bold manner that she calls herself as a freak.

Her poem, *The Sunshine Cat* is a powerful poetic illustration of her frankness regarding her emotions and feelings in the form of a complaint when she expresses her pain and mental agony which, first her husband, and then, a number of other men caused to her while having a sexual relationship with them. She accuses her husband of being selfish and coward who neither loved her nor used her as properly. He was a ruthless watcher of her sexual act with her sexual act with other men. She had tried her best to please her sexual partner by clinging to their hairy chest, but they all told her that they would only gratify her sexual desires but

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could not love her. Their hearts were empty of love and, that is why, Kamala Das lost her all desires for further love-making. This poem contains a confession which no woman would ever reveal to anybody.

In her poem, *The Invitation*, the poet explores powerfully that her lover, presumably her husband, used to perform the sexual act with her in a casual manner, coming to her in the intervals of his office work, and then going away. She did feel a certain pleasure during the sexual act and the bed becomes a paradise for her. But, the departure of her lover made her desperate, and she felt like committing suicide by jumping into the sea which seemed to invite her to enter its water and perish.

In her poem, *The Looking Glass*, the poet expresses her feeling in a more candid manner where the language of the poem describes a sexual relationship. Here, Kamala Das urges women not to feel shy and timid when they are about to perform the sexual act with their lovers. She tells them to stand nude by the side of their lover. She also tells the women to let their lovers know what they expect from them when they lie in bed together. She also asks the women to give to men all that makes them a woman; to let them smell their long hair, to smell the musk of sweat between their breasts, to let them experience the warm shock of their menstrual blood and to let them know their endless females hungers. Kamala Das' treatment of sex is really astonishing and her abbreviations in her respect are definitely based upon her own sexual experiences.

The poem, *The Old Playhouse* is remarkable regarding its confessional quality. The poem describes Kamala Das' feeling of suffocation in her husband's home because of her selfishness and egoism. Kamala Das' narrow life of domesticity with her husband, and his unemotional manner of performing the sex act had driven her to desperation and had made her feel that her mind was like an old playhouse which was no longer in use.

As a confessional poet, Kamala Das has done a great service to the female sex by making them conscious of their dormant sexual desires. Her confessional poetry has a therapeutic effect on the readers as well as on the writer herself. Confessional poetry is written by a poet under an internal pressure in order to express his or her grief. By confessing what the poet has undergone, he or she is able to obtain some consolation.

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