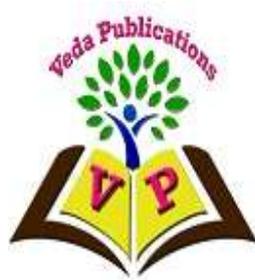


**CONFESSIONAL MOODS IN THE POETRY OF KAMALA DAS**Deepak Kumar¹, Ms. Varsha Verma²¹(Prof. Department of English, H. N. B. G. U. Srinagar, Garhwal (U.K) India)²(Research Scholar, Department of English, H. N. B. G. U. Srinagar, Garhwal (U.K) India)E mail: drdeepakkr74@gmail.com, verma.varsha98@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

Confessional poetry can be analysed as an extension of the stream of consciousness technique developed and modified by modern writers. It is a branch of present day poetry there is no place either for religion or ethics in this poetry. Her poetry is concerned both with the external and internal world. It is a kind of narrative and lyrical verse which deal with the fact and intimate mental and physical experience of the poets own life. Confessional mode of writing helps a female poet in the expression of her suppressed self and to regain her lost identity. As a confessional poet, Das exposes herself in some way or other in almost every poem that is why her poems often appear autobiographical. In the words of N V Raveendran, "The poetic experience in general is rooted in the individual poet's personal background as well as the regional and social factors." (Raveendran 2000 p. 28)ⁱ The Aim of this research paper is to study the Confessional moods in the poetry of Kamala Das.

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Confessional poetry representing the poets own circumstances experience and feelings, Kamala Das extends her poetry as a challenge against the customary male administration. The poetry uncovers private or loveless marriage issue about him or her including sexual experience, mental anguish and sickness. She expresses her desire through her poetic words. In the worlds of Swati Guleria,

Confessional element also help to expose how patriarchy assigned only sexual identity to women and that too not independent of patriarchal will as well as bring out the major difference that mark a great void between men and women. According to this difference, men hanker after pleasure, whereas women crave for an ideal niche full of love, care, mutual respect and a sense of thankfulness for what she does for the man instead of taking it for granted.ⁱⁱ(Guleria 2007p. 272)

She doesn't feel hesitated to express her feminine desires and challenges in the patriarchal society. In her poetry she expresses herself as a spouse, as a mother, as a granddaughter and a darling of her lovers. She was essentially a typical woman who seeks love. She was expressing herself and her female hunger in her poetry with a confessional mood.

In the poem *An Introduction* she expresses her feeling in that way she is not different from other people in this world. Sometimes she is sinful and sometimes she is pious, sometimes she is loved and sometimes she is the betrayal in love. She has the same joy in her life like other human beings and suffering with the same disappointment, which other people suffer in their life.

I am sinner,
I am saint. I am the beloved and the
Betrayed. I have no joys which are
not yours, no
Aches which are not yours. I too call
myself I.ⁱⁱⁱ (Das 2009 p. 63)

Kamala Das in her poetry maintains clear distinctions between love and lust. She also discloses

nostalgic feelings about her house at Malabar, where she spends her childhood with her grandmother, who was a great supporter of her, she received her love and affection she needed from her grandmother. The most lovable memory for her was her grandmother's love in her home town Malabar in Kerala. The sweetest memory of her life was her grandmother's relationship with her.

There is a house now far away where once
I received love... That women died,
The house withdrew into silence,^{iv}

(Das 2009 p. 13)

She recalls the house where she once used to live with her grandmother; she used to receive lots of love. In the words of Z F Molvi,

She tells us that she was proud of that house because it gave her genuine love and true peace and comfort. Her present unsettled condition is contrasted with this sense of comfort. She has lost her right path and she has been reduced to a beggar seeking love at the stranger's house.^v(Molvi 2013 p. 86).

Confessional writing can be a source of power; it takes strength to disclose ones personal and private experience. Her confessional poetry also deal between fulfilment and an unfulfillment love in her life. For her poetry is something deeply personal. *Summer in Calcutta* has a large number of love poems bearing different shades of love. She herself admits that in her poems there is too much love. In her autobiography *My Story* she expresses that, "Love has a beginning and an end but lust has no such faults."^{vi} (My Story 2009 p. 178)

Failure of love and the birth of poetry seem to be significantly related to each other in Kamala Das's poetry. She recollected all stuff of her past incidents and write down on paper with honest treatment in her poetry. All her pain and frustration she has been pen downed in her poetry. She feels in the absence of pure love a person life is similar to a prisoner in her own house. She looks everywhere for love but she get it only in her dreams. In the words of Mosoumeh M. Moradi:



Women's social unrest in respect of education and career, sexual desire and frustration, suffocation of a caged loveless marriage, numerous affair, the futility of lust, the shame and sorrow of not finding love after repeated attempts, the loneliness and neurosis that stalk women especially and such other things which were not spoken of candidly are powerfully dealt with for the first time in her poetry. She protests against the marginalisation of women and social injustice and communicates a powerful female sensibility in her poetry.^{vii} (Moradi 2010 p. 54)

A Hot Noon in Malabar, she describes some of her experiences of her home in Malabar where sellers are selling different things in the noon. This poem was exceptionally delightful for the poetess.

This is a noon for beggars with whining
Voices, a noon for men who come from hills
With parrots in a cage and fortune-cards,
All stained with time, for brown Kurava girls
With old eyes, who read palm in light singsong
Voices, for bangle-sellers who spread^{viii} (Das 2009 p. 49)

In the poem, *The Sunshine Cat*, Das expresses her painful experience with her husband. A N Dwivedi commenting on the poem and says, "The poem directly highlights the miseries of a forlorn woman."^{ix} (Dwivedi 2011 p. 100) She expresses that she had formally loved her husband in the hope that he also will love her in the same manner. She no longer loves him at all as he is a selfish husband. Her disgust with her husband gives her a reason to go for extra marital affairs. Dwivedi comments, "She is totally lonely and frustrated. Those who claimed to be kind towards her had only subjected her to humiliation and injury."^x (101)

She said, walls to shut me in... Her husband shut her
In, every morning; locked her in a room of books
.....

Line, a half-thin line, and in the evening when

He returned to take her out, she was a cold and

Half dead woman, now of no use at all to men.^{xi} (Das 2009 p. 51)

Dwivedi again mentions that,

"The poetess's life overbrimming with sexuality finds no true source for fulfilment, and it, therefore, becomes all the more miserable and deplorable... The poem is pervaded with the air of lust and passion. It has no place for pure and true love. The poetess might feel a hunger for the ideal lover, but she cannot be freed of the sin of committing adultery with other men, and she seems to cry over the loss of her 'use' for other men in general."^{xii} (102)

In *The Invitation* Das recalls her experience of the sexual act with a lover. The poetess was feeling tormented by her memory of her experience of love making with a lover of hers. Her lover had gone away after making love to her and had not returned.

I have a man's fist in my head today
Clenching, unclenching....

I have got all the Sunday evening pains

The sea is garrulous today. Come in. Come in. What do you lose by dying, and

Besides, your losses are my gains.^{xiii}
(Web)

This poem is a kind of monologue between the poet and the sea. Commenting on this poem Dwivedi says,

The poem highlights the staggering situation of a middle class wife in the clutches of male domination. It externalizes the poetess's helpless



condition in a loveless family. That her life is empty and Sterile without her lover, who is not likely to come back to her, because so clear in it. There is no solution to her personal dilemma arousing suicidal thoughts in her.^{xiv}(105)

An Introduction, outstanding amongst other poetry of Das from the very first volume of poems *Summer in Calcutta*, entire poem written in an 'Autobiographical' approach. The use of 'I' belongs to Das herself. In it she expresses her personal and private life. She shows the capacity for self-assertion. It is the poem of revolt against conventionalism and against the recreations which society has been forcing upon woman. In this poem she is portraying different incidents about her life. It is where she reveals many facts of her life. She describes herself as an Indian, brown in colour, born in Malabar, she speaks three languages but she writes only in two languages. Even though she does not know politics but she is aware of it.

I don't know politics but I know the names
Of those in power, and can repeat them like
Days of week, or names of months, beginning with
Nehru. I am Indian, very brown, born in
Malabar, I speak three languages, write in
Two, dream in one. Don't write in English, they said,
English is not your mother-tongue. Why not leave
Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,
Every one of you? Why not let me speak in
Any language I like? The language I speak
Becomes mine,^{xv} (Das 2009 p.62)

One is her native language Malayalam and second one is English. She is having the ability to talk in three dialects, writing in two dialects. She is asserting the fact that even though Malayalam is her

mother-tongue she prefers to write in English as it come naturally to her and advices relatives, friend and critics to live her alone and also claims that it her right to speak and write in any language she wants. N V Raveendran writes that, "the poem is attempting to identify her own unique position through asserting her right to speak, write and select a male companion."^{xvi}(43) She explains even though a person may not speak the language correctly but should be honest. Their imperfections only make her human. Language is expression of love, joy, sorrow and hopes.

Later in this poem she writes about her journey from childhood to adolescence and the tender age of sixteen she is married to a much elder person. After seeing her husband she is not happy with him as she does not find him healthy. She just wanted love as love, is the most essential thing for a woman but her husband does not establish any emotional bondage only performs crude sex, and she feels her womanhood being crushed and feel pity for herself.

I was child, and later they
Told me I grew, for I became tall,
my limbs
Swelled and one or two places
sprouted hair. When
I asked for love, not knowing what
else to ask
For, he drew a youth of sixteen into
the
Bedroom and closed the door, He
did not beat me
But my sad woman-body felt so
beaten.
The weight of my breasts and
womb crushed me.
Pitifully.^{xvii} (Das 2009 p.62)

Here she is talking of her male companion and probably her husband and talks of a universal experience of a woman. The very essence of a woman is 'Love' and she is always looking for it in her male companion. But for man, only wants woman for sexual gratification and is not interested in establishing any emotional bond with her. She talks of masculine ego that reduces the females to a 'dwarf'.



I met a man, loved him. Call
Him not by any name, he is every
man
Who wants woman, just as I am
every
Woman who seeks love. In him...
the hungry haste
Of rivers, in me... the oceans'
tireless
Waiting. Who are you, I ask each
and everyone,
The answer is, it is I. Anywhere and,
Everywhere, I see the one who calls
himself I;^{xviii} (Das 2009 p.63)

Through her poems she wants to establish her identity and her war is not of superiority but of equality. Das has given to the readers a self representation of herself. Her poems are profoundly Confessional as she expresses her torment and her internal voice. She experiences lust from the men who came across her and did not find any true love that she longed for. In the book *The Aesthetics of Sensuality* N V Raveendran writes, "In Kamala Das, the transfer from the celebration of love and lust to anxiety and frustration is the transfer from presence to absence the manifestation of the reality sought for."^{xix} (29)

In the poem *The Old Playhouse* Kamala Das expresses the sentiments of decay and death. She feels suffocated in the company of her husband because she feels that her husband is a selfish man. Her disappointment in her married life gives her way to compose poetry and express her agony and torment.

I lost my will and reason, to all your
Questions I mumbled incoherent
replies. The summer
Begins to pall. I remember the
runder breezes
Of the fall and the smoke from the
burning leaves.^{xx} (Das 2011 p.1)

In the words of A N Dwivedi,

These autobiographical extracts demonstrate clearly that the poetess needed love and tenderness, security and permanence, from her strong man,

but he could not satisfy her on these scores. Hence her unredeemed damnation and suffering in his company.^{xxi} (109)

At the point when her feminine self is pushed to the most extreme end of nonexistence, she retaliates back with her poetry. Frank exposure of her body and the portrayal of individual moments are irritating to the age-old established idea of Indian culture. She completes the structure on her own self-identity of life and also on her individual female personality. Das self-identity turns out; firmly inside her poems.

I also know that by confessing
By peeling off my layers
I reach closer to the soul
And
To the bone's
Supreme indifference.^{xxii}

(Das 2011 p.7)

Her poetry has a universal appeal. Her grief is not of herself but of the entire 'female species'. Her poem *Composition* reveals that she is a deeply distressed woman.

Perhaps my innocence is not
All that lost,
If the stones still endure
And pieces of mortar lie scattered
In the field.^{xxiii} (Das 2011 p.3)

In the words of Sharada Iyer she writes,

Confessional poets court death and disintegration as well as psychic wholeness and insights. This tension between two opposites is reflected in the constantly shifting moods of confessional poetry. 'Composition' embraces such diverse moods as passionate attachment, agonizing guilt, nauseating disgust and inhuman bitterness. Images of deep involvement in the physical act of love are followed by those of physical rotting, disgust and sickness in poems like 'The Old Playhouse', 'In Love', 'Gino'.^{xxiv} (Iyer 2013 p.121)



She has lost her emotional identity with her husband and she is so disgusted with him to an extreme level that she finds ecstasy in others arms. In her poem Glass she says

I enter other's
Lives, and
Make of every trap of lust
A temporary home.^{xxv} (Das 2011 p.21)

As a confessional poet she shares her own experiences. She is very candid and honest with the details in her poetry. Her emotions and grief's in the poetry sounds so real that are convincing to her readers.

According to the study of Kamala Das poems we conclude that the confessional poetry comes from her unsuccessful marriage life. She always speaks about love, love which is related to men-women relationship, as a confessional poet she is in search of love, she was emotionally shattered because she finds no love in all her life. Suffering and pain colours her poetic structure. All her journey for true love gives her frustration; her verse is a statement of her private encounters in issues of love and sex .It is most remarkable point in the poetry of Das, love and protest is the chief impulse of her confession. Her poetic works are personal at the same time universal.

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