

## QUEST FOR LOVE IN THE SELECT POEMS OF KAMALA DAS

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### ABSTRACT

*We presented a paper on Quest for Love in Kamala Das Select Poems. Kamala Das is one of the most distinctive and original of Indian poets writing in English to-day. Her poetry is characterised by extreme sincerity and integrity, she speaks out of her love-longings in her poetry. Most of her poems deal with the theme of unfulfilled love and yearning for love. Quest for love or rather the failure to find emotional fulfilment through love, is the central theme of Kamala's poet.*

Literature is one of the fine arts like Music and Painting. It is fundamentally an expression of life through the medium of language. Literature reflects an interest in the world of reality as well as imagination and our love of form and order.

Indian poetry and Indian literature in general has a long history dating back to Vedic times. They were written in various Indian languages such as Vedic, Sanskrit, classical Sanskrit, Hindi, Oriya, Tamil, Kannada, Bengali and Urdu. Poetry in foreign languages such as Persian and English also has a strong influence on Indian poetry. The poetry reflects diverse spiritual traditions within India. In particular, Many Indian poets have been inspired by mystical experiences. Poetry is the oldest form of literature and has a rich written and oral tradition. Kamala Das is born in Malabar in 1934. Both her mother and grandfather were poets in Malayalam. She started writing poetry while in school, but before contributing to Indian poetry in English she had won fame as a Malayalam writer. In 1963, she won the PEN'S Asian poetry prize. Her first volume *Summer in Calcutta* (1965), *The Descendants* (1967), *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems* (1973). Her popularity in Kerala is based chiefly on her short stories and autobiography.

Kamala Das poetry is all about personal experiences which intensely fell desire for love, for emotional involvement and her failure to achieve such a relationship. Hence, knowledge of her life and personality is essential for an understanding of her poetry. She constantly speaks of her Dravidian blood and of her Nair heritage. She optimized the treatment of female sexuality. She infused her writing with power. Satya Dev Jaggi says "she is intensely, largely, man-made world." (New Indian poets and poetry Page No 114). Kamala Das expresses her own feeling and sufferings in many of her poems. All over her writings she searches for Love and Affection. Kamala Das continues to write both prose and poetry, both in English and Malayalam. She is thus bilingual, like most other Indian Poets writing in English. She wrote the poetry self-delineation and self-expression in a lyrical manner.

Her poems are about the sufferings of women in the patriarchal society. Women are used only for Sexual affairs. There is no one to share the feelings, thoughts and sufferings of women. They are considered only as child bearers. Thus issues are expressed by Kamala Das in her poem "An Introduction". She wrote:

"I was child, and later they  
Told me I grew for I became tall, my limbs  
Swelled and one or two places sprouted hair  
I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask  
Bedroom an closed the door. He did not beaten  
But my sad woman-body felt so beaten  
The weight of my breasts and womb crushed me."(Lines from 23-30)

Show the sufferings of Female child in this male society. Woman are used only for sex. Kamala Das wants to be a man she hates to be a woman. It explores the crust of the poet's self and also other women. It is frankly confessional terrifyingly true and exclusively an articulate voice of the feminine sensibility. It deals with the puzzling adolescence and the pain of growing up.

"Dress in saris, be girl  
Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook  
Be a quarreller with servants."(lines from 33-35)

Kamala Das' childhood days are vividly described in her poem "Punishment in Kindergarten". In it, she expressed her longing for love as a childhood. She wrote:

"Today the world is a little more my own.  
No need to remember the pain,  
A blue-frocked women caused, throwing  
Words at me like pots and pan, to drain  
That honey coloured day of peace.  
Why don't you join the others, what  
A peculiar child you are!"(Line from 1-7)

Kamala Das use the theme of nostalgia in her poem "**My Grandmother House**". In this poem Kamala Das discussed her past and present life

The opening line "There is a house now far away where once I received love..." (line1). It shows her longing for love. Her grandmother grants more love on her. After her grandmother death the house became silence and snakes moved among the books.

She compares the poet live in the city a long distance from her grandmother's house but she remembers that when she was a girl she lived there and received love from her grandmother. The memories make her sad. But in present she has more problems and sufferings. She has no happy life. So, she wants to go back to her grandmother house and where she feels love and caring life. She feels that the present has give only sorrow.

Kamala Das tries to kill the sorrows with sweet memories. At the end of the poem Kamala Das says:

"I lived in such a house and was proud, and loved.....I who have lost my way and beg now at srangers doors to Receive love at leasts in small changes...." (lines13-16).

The poetess is choked with grief. She yearns for love, begs for it even from strangers, but fails to get it. She does not get it even in small change or coins. Her love-hunger remains unsatisfied. She seeks to fill it with love but to no avail.

“**A Hot Noon in Malabar**” is also expresses her nostalgia yearning for her happy childhood and for her family house in Malabar. The poet compares summer season in her present life with past life. The present life summer is torcher to her. Whereas her summer childhood days in Malabar gives her memory. She wrote ‘with parrots summer, she saw a man ‘with parrots in a cage and fortune-cards’ (no.3) and also kurawa girls who read palm in light singsong voices. Bangle sellers sells bangles but it fully covered with dust of roads. Their feet become cracks, but their voice are sweet and pleasent. Even though it is summer Kamala Das found happy in there but In strange city the people looks are wild, wild voice wild thoughts, wild love. So it is a torture to her. Her home in Malabar is the ideal dream world for her.

In “**The Looking Glass**” she longs for husband love and affections. Women are considered as weaker in the patriarchal society. Men look women only with lustful eyes as she writes in the first line of the poem: “Getting a man to love is easy”. Kamala Das life long quest was for love, for emotional involvement, but her quest always end in disasters of lust, which brought frustrations and disillusionments in their wake. She writes:

“woman stand nude before the glass with him  
So that he sees himself the stronger one”(line 3,4)

“**The Looking Glass**” is an externalisation of her humiliations and frustrations, the women in the poem, seeks love from the men. They have to satisfy their lust. This poem presents a, true, realistic image of the lustful relationship between men and women. In this patriarchal world it is woman business to satisfy the male ego by admiring his masculinity, and her own feminine weakness. Should she writes herself was called upon to play such role.

“Dropping towels and the jerky way he  
Urinate. All the fond details that make  
Him male and your ony man.”(line from 10-12)

“**The Looking Glass**” is a mirror which faithfully images man’s ego, and the humiliating lot of woman in a patriarchal society.

Kamala Das life-long quest for love, for emotional involvement, but her quest always ended in disasters of lust. Most of her poem deals with the theme of unfulfilled love. Kamala Das’ psychological story of life and sufferings are narrated in her autobiography “My Story”. She was given Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award in 1969 for cold, a collection of short stories in Malayalam. Devendra Kohli points out ‘Courage and honesty are the strength of Kamala Das’(New Indian English Poets and Poetry pg.no.96).

Love is Kamala Das’ central theme and her chief pre-occupation. But Love has many facets, the poetess studies love into many angels. Theme of Kamala Das poetry is physical love. Her poetry may be a serious break from the formerly female Indian poets it is the celebrations of the universal experience of self and love despair. Das’ story honesty extends to her exploration of woman hood and love. The longing to lose one’s self in passionate love is discussed in “The Looking Glass” from The Decendants.

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