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### Tendency of Alienation in the Poetry's of Kamala Das

**Abstract:** Alienation can be connected with the loss of essential part of self, and it is a sense of self-doubt, apprehension and loss of identity. Alienation is certainly the feature of Kamala Das Poetry. The message of intense torment in the Kamala Das poetry issues from early childhood. Her works show her alienation thus leading to loneliness which is the repetitive theme in her poems. She expresses that her life was devoid of emotional bonding from all her relations. She did not receive the warmth love from her parents nor her husband and also not from extra marital affairs as well as from the society. The Aim of this research paper is to study the tendency of alienation in her poetry of Kamala Das.

**Keywords:** Alienation, Loneliness, Loss of Identity, Self-doubt, Unrest.

Kamala Das's poems reflected volcanic eruption of her inner self which is due to unrest of her emotional dissatisfaction and betrayal that has led to the loss of identity, loneliness and thus led to alienation. It is central source of violence that can be located in her poems and it gives immense passion to her poetry. She was the person who has added new aspect to the poetry of love and sex written by Indians in the English Language. She is bold enough to describe the complexity of man-woman relation in physical aspects. She feels the pain of alienation in every stage of her life. During childhood, she did not get the necessary affection from her parents as she feels she is born of loveless union, and parents are not

happy of her swarthy skin and ordinary features. Another aspect that has contributed the feeling of alienation is also from the discrimination she faced in the missionary school in Calcutta. She is married at the age of 15 and she reckons that she did not receive the love, companionship and warmth love from her husband, Nor from the men who were in extra marital relation with her, as the union is loveless and only of lust. Mr. Jayakrishnan Nair writes:

She feels that the compulsion of clarifying the feminine point of view. Alienation and ostracism that inevitably follows it are structural ground realities of her poetry. Alienation, as such, is the spinal force of her poetic tract; and she comprehends the smothering of man-woman relations from this alienated angle, like a caged bird, fluttering her poetic wings in order to seek the necessary freedoms of survival and existence. (Nair 63)

Her poetic violence is also directed towards the society as she feels that, the society is responsible for man domineering the woman, and gives her no freedom to express her thoughts.

According to her Autobiography *My Story* she writes that her parents were dissimilar and horribly mismatched. This disharmony did not reach to any conflict as Kamala Das mother was timid person and created a harmony to the relatives and friends. Father was very mechanically provided only his duties towards his children without affection. She express that they have grown up as loveless children. In her poem:

Next to Indira Gandhi my father I feared the most

He was the one who told me when I was five

That dark children should wear only wear white

He was the one who had no time for me

When I was growing up (Next to Indira Gandhi 1-5)

She is characterizing her father as a fearful person like Indira Gandhi. She held her father responsible for decomposition of domestic atmosphere. Instead of love and compassion they have created sense of anxiety and hatred among children.

You chose my clothes for me

My tutors, my hobbies, my friends,

And at fifteen with my first saree you picked me a husband (28-30)

She is suggesting the autocrat behavior of her father in the above lines. She suggests that every vital decision of my life was taken by my father without consideration of my views. These facts deny her very identity and suggest that she is merely an object and should follow his orders. In her autobiography she writes that her mother was always indifferent and could not give the love and security she needed as a child. Since child is helplessly dependent on its parents, if denied proper nurturing, it becomes reflective and introspective.

She has the feeling of negligence and alienation were first sown in her childhood in the alienated atmosphere of her home as well as her school and thus leading to loneliness.

She went to a missionary school in Calcutta. She and her brother faced racial discrimination in school. They faced physiological as well as psychological atrocities in school. In her autobiography, she has pen down many incidents of such tortures in her school as they were brown children of Indian origin. If any guest arrived in school visit all the brown children were asked to wait in corridor behind the lavatories. The authorship of poem written by Kamala Das was given to a white child named Shirley. Such unpleasant incident in childhood has created a lifetime trauma. It became a serious point of personal grievances in

Kamala Das Sensibility. She transmits this substance of trauma in her mind throughout her life. In her Autobiography she has title the chapter “The humiliation of a brown child in European School” (My Story 1)

She had not even finished her studies but her father decided to get her married at the tender age of fifteen. Kamala Das was married to a much older person. Her first meeting with her husband after engagement was not a pleasant one. He was not gentle on her. According to her autobiography *My Story* she imagined marriage as, “I thought then that love was flowers in the hair, it was the yellow moon lightening up a familiar face and soft words whispered in the ear...” (85)

But to her despair her husband was not an emotional or a sensitive person but he was very brutal and practice sex mechanically. He satisfied her physical needs but could not quench her thirst of emotional bonding for which she had longed since childhood. Kamala Das feels basic ingredient of woman is love and she was always devoid of it. In her autobiography she mentions that, “I was to be the victim of a young man’s carnal hunger and perhaps, out of our union, there would be born a few children....marriage meant nothing more than a show of wealth to families like ours.” (81-82) O. J. Thomas rightly says that, “this sense of helplessness and alienation prompts her to become a rebel and she looks down upon all her relations with contempt and disgust.” (Thomas 44)

In the poem *The Old Play House* she suggests her complete alienation from her husband and in the strong language she expresses her strong dissatisfaction with him.

You planned to tame a shallow, 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 endless

Pathways of the sky. (The Old Playhouse 1-5)

She symbioses herself as “Shallow” a bird and her husband wants to tame her but “shallow” is a bird that cannot be tamed. She also attributes the term “The long summer” as this season is unbearable. But in her poem she compares it with love and she also suggests that she has the urge to fly and that was her very nature. She wants to seek freedom from the predefined roles of a woman.

...You call me a wife,

I was taught to break saccharine into your tea and

To offer the right moment the vitamins. Cowering

Beneath your monstrous ego I ate the magic loaf and

Became a dwarf. (12-16)

Addressing him she says that he calls her his wife but does not show any affection or love towards her as the wife expects. She also says he also made her do her duties as a housewife. She has lost her self-identity.

...He serves his love in lethal doses,

For, love is Narcissus at the water's edge, haunted

By its own lonely face. (26-28)

She explains that he uses a strong manipulative technique and has been given lethal doses i.e trying to kill by slowly by his impassive manner of love-making.

They did this to her, the men who knew her, the man

She loved, who loved her not enough, being selfish

And a coward, the husband who neither loved nor

Used her, but was a ruthless watcher, (The Sunshine Cat1-4)

She shows her complete disappointment with her relation with husband, she describes him as selfish and coward man, who has not loved her or has used her properly. Kamala das also has feeling of alienation from her extra marital affairs. She was wearied and disappointed from the husband unemotional manner of making love to her, so she finds other sexual partners. Here also she is disappointed and condemns them of their making love is full of lust and nobody can give her emotional satisfaction and security.

Face into their smells and their young lusts to forget,

To forget, oh, to forget... and, they said, each of

Them, I do not love, I cannot love, it is not

In my nature to love, but I can be kind to you...(7-10)

She convicts other men also with whom she slept, could not quench her thirst of true love. She tried utmost win their love but in vain, they also prove to full of lust and give her utmost physical satisfaction but not the love she desires. But they promise her to be kind.

In the poem *My Grandmother's House* she is mourning the death of her Grandmother and she finds that she has lost her way. She finds herself diminished to a status of beggar to find love from strangers and begs them to give so. She has always felt very secured and wanted to time in the Grandmothers house, but now she feels unsecured because of her sufferings and moved in anguish. A woman particularly suffers a lot when her male counterpart lacks the necessary objective and sensibility of the love partner. In her poem *Conflagration*;

Women, is this happiness, this lying buried

Beneath a man? (Conflagration 42)

She rightly points out woman world or happiness is not limited to be beneath a man.

Kamala Das in many of her poems show alienation from society in general and by large. She feels the society is unjust and unkind to her. When she is writing poems in English, society criticizes her and advices her to write in her mother tongue.

...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, and visiting cousins, (An Introduction 5-8)

She protests towards the attitude of the society, and saying she would write in any language she feels comfortable to express her feelings. A. N. Dwivedi. Commenting on that, "Mrs. Das's entire work, is to have the freedom to be herself, it is to be herself. Here she transforms her alienation from 'critics, friends, visiting cousins,' who say, "Don't write in English,' into a larger and more universal alienation (sexual, social, and artistic)." (Dwivedi 9)

...Dress in sarees, be girl,

Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,

Be quarreller with servants. Fit in. Oh, (33-35)

In the same poem she is advised to wear sari and ask to behave like a girl and perform usual duties of a women. She is portraying average grievances of Indian women as extremely exploited agent in the social, ethical, moral and existential circumstances. Devendra Kolhi writes about her poems specially the *An Introduction*, he expresses his views as,



An Introduction' is concerned with the question of human identity, but it effectively uses the confessional and the rhetorical modes in order to focus pertinent questions relating to a woman's or an Indian poet's identity in English. 'Fit in', they said. 'Belong, cried the categorizers'. But she responds to this by transforming her alienation from 'critics, friends, visiting cousins' who say, 'Don't write in English', into a larger and more universal alienation (sexual, social, and artistic) that seems to characterize some of the best literature of our age and is perhaps at the heart of any attempt at self-exploration and self-integration. First, the freedom to choose her language, and a confidence in her creative talent. (Web)

In the poem *The Looking Glass* she has failed to find any love in anybody's heart, her body was one gleamed like Brass but now it has become gloomy and deprived.

Body which once under his touch had gleamed

Like burnished brass, now drab and destitute. (*The Looking Glass* 23-24)

In the book *A Critical Spectrum*, Sharada Iyer remarks that, "the poems are remarkable because they reveal here feeling of anxiety, alienation, meaninglessness, futility, acute sense of isolation, fragmented self and loss of identity." (Iyer 120)

According to the study of Kamala Das poems we come to the conclusion that the origin of alienation leading to loneliness started right from her childhood. Her parents failed to provide the attention love and security she needed. Her Father mechanically performed his duties and mother had no inclination towards her. She was brought up as a neglected child. This played a important role in the journey to be a rebellious poet. Her early marriage was a disaster as her husband was interested in physical love and could not establish emotional bond with her. Due to failure of married life she searched the love in her extramarital affair

but in reality she could not achieve it any of her relations. This feeling of alienation and loneliness was carried forward in the journey called life and many of her poems depict this feeling. In the words of Jayakrishnan Nair, “her feeling of alienation is born out of her experiences as a neglected daughter, uncared wife, and probably even as an unloved mother in the modern familial context.” (Nair 61)

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