



Research Paper

Feministic Reading of Kamala Das' Summer in Calcutta and The Descendants

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Abstract:

Kamala Das voices her personal experiences of life in her poetry. The energetic and ranging verse of Kamala Das moves through many issues of the world. First and foremost, it charts the world as seen from women's eyes, as wife, lover, mother and daughter, each role constituting different demands and the different perspective around her. Experiencing all the roles, she channels experience and through imagination explains the emotions, relationships, hopes and despair of many other women in India. The present paper focuses on the feministic issues in Das' poetry collections Summer in Calcutta and The Descendants.

Keywords: Social Discrimination, Self-assertion, personal agony, Lust Voyeurism, Patriarchy, Marital Discord.

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Feminism claims that gender norms are set in stone and that women are taught to fit into them. This suggests that the roles of 'daughter' and 'mother' are social rather than innate, as women are taught to act and think in ways that suit the role. As a result, gender discrimination is a social phenomenon rather than a natural one. Inequality is reinforced through social structures such as the family, religion, school, knowledge systems, and the arts. Because these mechanisms are hidden and appear to be less oppressive, they are useful in perpetuating male dominance. Feminist philosophy is working to dismantle these patriarchal conceptual constructs.

In her seminal work *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), Mary Wollstonecraft highlights the problems of women and she outrightly rejects the discourse that woman is inferior to man. This inequality in a man-women relationship was according to her due to the "lack of education". She suggests that women should be treated as equal to men. Women should strive to become companions of their husbands. Also, she suggests that education is compulsory to improve the status of women. Wollstonecraft was the first thinker to claim that gender roles are social not natural. She attributes women's love for fashion, romance and beauty to cultural conditioning. Women have been fooled to believe that these are what make them truly feminine. This is the major contribution of Wollstonecraft to show that femininity is not natural but social and women have been given role according to social conventions.

Simon de Beauvoir in her famous work *The Second Sex* (1949) points out that men are capable of Stereotyping and mystifying women. Patriarchy is strengthened because of the stereotyping and mystification. She argued that women are also responsible for their own plight as they accepted these stereotypical roles silently. She further claims that women are always treated as negative of men, where men are ideal, the norm and women the deviant of others. She questions the status and gender role of woman in traditional society.

When we see the situation of women in India, it is a bit different from the situation of Western women in a couple ways. The deprivation, exploitation and oppression suffered by women is identical everywhere in the world but there is a difference in the value system and historical circumstances in which they are pitched. The tradition in India has mainly encouraged the subservience of women and promoted their subjection. The society in India has been hierarchical. Reacting to the feminist movement in India, Suma Chitnis comments:

"The most distinctive feature of this movement is that it was initiated by men. It was only towards the end of the century that women joined the fray. The list of names of men who championed the cause of women is long... Raja Ramohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshav Chandra Sen, Malabari, Phule, Agarkar, Ranade, Karve..... to mention a few. The record of the reform they undertook to achieve is impressive. It reveals that their efforts spanned action to abolish the practice of Sati, the custom of child remarriage, the custom of

disfiguring widows, the ban on remarriage of the upper caste Hindu widows and a host of other evil practices that

affected women". (*qtd. in Rajan:12*)

Indian feminism has its inner most roots on mind of reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Jyotiba Phule and thinkers along with Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi who had sturdy choice to remove the evils triumphing with inside the society as sati, child marriage, widowhood etc. The viceroy Lord William Bentinck banned sati in 1829. Raja Ramohan Roy supported this move. Remarriage of Widows turned into sanctioned in 1856 and in 1929 a regulation came into effect prohibiting child marriage. Education of the girls became the maximum hard undertaking in India at that point. In 1850s Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar opened many number of primary schools in villages of Bengal. At that point most effective women from the households of zamindars have been allowed to take education. In 1851 Jyotiba Phule educated the Schedule caste ladies in Poona. Many organisations had been installed to show and remedy the issues of girls.

Indian feminism is actually an offshoot of Western feminist thought. It has brought about a new awareness among women. Some Indian feminists are concerned about the education of women, family violence and female sexuality. There are feminists like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Chandra Talpade Mohanti, Gita Sehgal, Sarojini Sahoo, Ruth Vanita and many others who helped in improving the condition of Indian women. Their writing is full of stories about their struggle to get education and the obstacles they encountered in the way. There has been much success in creating a space where women's writing and fearless creative expression can be discussed.

Indian poetry by women writers began to establish its new existence form 1960s. These poets highlighted the plight of women trapped in oppressive institutions such as arranged marriages, child-marriage, restrictions on women and bearing of more children. There was an enormous discontent shown by the poets regarding the treatment of women in India. Large number of women poets in India have tried to expose the female subjectivity in order to create their individual identity that is not allowed in patriarchal society. It was absolutely a time to change and many new faces came in front are: Kamala Das, Sunita Jain, Eunice de Souza, Imtiaz Dharker, Mamta Kalia, and Melanie Silgado to name a few. Modern women's struggle and the crux of Kamala Das's poetry is a search for an identity. In this process of self-assertion, she sways between a nostalgic past and a nightmarish present. There are some dualities of past and present. The past symbolises security, love, freedom and the present stands for insecurity and bondage of the society. So, she has the positive to celebrate at but at the same time there is negative check of the present.

Kamala Das, in her poems portrays a love experience and various aspects of tensions involved in her life. The intricate nature of her poetry can be perceived with ease by paying heed on some of the most essential aspects of her relationship with her husband, the lovers, the grandmother's house and the society as also in terms of her being a woman and as a poet. She puts honestly everything in her poetry without any fear, which provides her poetic realm with a quality of uniqueness.

Kamala Das gives a glimpse of love experience influenced from her encounters with her husband, it also plays a major role in craving for more love from other person's which she seeks in his absence. She in her unconscious state has an urge for love, which her husband is not able to provide her. To fill this void, she has to seek it around her from other person's. Therefore, this love experience, provides the most important aspect of her poetic exploration.

Her life is interwoven by a dichotomy of trying to find spiritual fulfilment on the one hand and physical fulfilment on the other. She feels exasperated due to her husband's inability to offer her complete spiritual fulfilment. To satisfy her unconscious urge for spiritual fulfilment, she tries to flirt and to develop some extra-marital affairs. In her autobiographical work 'My Story', she reveals that she even tried adultery for a short while. All these things find expression in her poetic oeuvre.

Kamala Das' poems deal with both with the external as well as the internal worlds, and she is more inclined towards the external world despite her inner restlessness. Although her poetic realm contains an inner landscape, yet it retains its objectiveness. She manipulates the aesthetic details to speak for themselves before they speak for her. These facts are shown by all the poetic collections she has written.

Summer in Calcutta, begins with the poem, "The Dance Of the Eunuchs", which has an ironical tone and temper of the whole volume. "The Dance of the " reveals, through an external and familiar situation, the poet's inner anguish and unfulfilled desire. Writing about eunuchs, she symbolically depicts the state of suppressed class of people in a society. The poet herself being the victim of patriarchal society, talks about transgenders who are also a victim of the social norms that alienate them from being treated as normal human beings.

The transgenders who are socially boycotted either dance, sing or beg to earn money. But their songs lack any joy, rhythm or sweetness. They try hard to look attractive yet the society looks down on them. The poet compares her own condition with that of eunuchs. These eunuchs serve as an objective correlative to her

repressed unconscious desires. Like the eunuchs, she as a woman is also looked down by the patriarchal society. She may seem to be enjoying the life apparently but internally, she is sad, lonely and struggling.

The poet is the victim of the society like the eunuchs. The women are also treated as sub-humans. Like transgenders, women has to please her husband and in-laws. She has to smile without joy, work without stopping and to quench the sexual desire of her husband without enjoying herself. Therefore, Kamala Das states that status of women in society is no better than that of transgenders.

The next poem, "The Freaks" is about the loveless marital relationship of the poet, in it the female persona tries to unburden her heart. Her husband, is attracted only towards her outward appearance but is unable to enjoy the inner beauty of her soul. It depicts the agony of female persona, who remains a non-participant in the act of love-making because it denies her the emotional and intellectual thrills of life.

The poem begins with a patriarchal tone, where man has an absolute authority to do anything while the woman remains silent or passive. It opens with:

"He talks, turning a sun-stained
Cheek to me, his mouth, a dark
Cavern, where stalactites of
Uneven teeth gleam..."

(Summer in Calcutta, p. 20)

The reference to the word "he" indicates that only men have the privilege to talk in the patriarchal society. The women have to silently follow their husbands. Next, the poet calls his cheek 'sun-stained', this is the first ugly reference she makes about him. This indicates the kind of grudge she feels inside her heart. The mouth is related to a 'cavern' i.e., a big cave, also his teeth are related to 'stalactites', the long thin pieces of stone that hang in the entrance of the cave. Again these are the attributes of his ugliness, the female persona shows repulsive things in order to reveal that she doesn't want to be with him.

Though she doesn't like her husband, yet she cannot resist the sexual advances from him. His lust voyeurism is unstoppable. He makes moves to lure her,

"...his right
Hand on my knee, while our minds
Are willed to race towards love;
But, they only wander, tripping
Idly over puddles of
Desire..."

(Summer in Calcutta, p. 10)

He treats her as an object of desire. He doesn't care about her emotions, he makes advances to enjoy sex with her. He places his right hand on her knee as a gesture of love-making. However, the mind of woman keeps wandering to avoid any sign of emotional involvement. The relationship here is purely sensual as the lovers are filled with 'puddles of desire' (lust without love). The relationship seems to be lifeless and devoid of any meaningful spiritual or emotional involvement. In this way, the poet dramatizes the plight of women involved in a lifeless and loveless relationship. She feels almost suffocated but has to bear all this because of social compulsions.

The poet here is not against the physical love but it must pave the way for spiritual love. What she despises most is the man's physical hunger. He doesn't care about the emotions of his partner, he goes on to hunt his prey:

"Can this man with
Nimble finger-tips unleash
Nothing more alive than the
Skin's lazy hungers?"

(Summer in Calcutta, p. 10)

The poet in these lines, addresses her husband as "this man" because of the lack of love for him. The poet in a rhetorical question asks whether this man (her husband) can love her or not. This doubt arises because of his swiftly moving fingers on her skin in order to fill his sexual desire. She is critical of his purely lifeless and uninspiring love. Finally, when poet observes that there is a huge gap between the two persons, one striving for body and the other for spiritual fulfilment. She declares herself as a 'freak' (abnormal or strange).

She says:

"I am a freak. It's only
To save my face, I flaunt, at
Times, a grand, flamboyant lust."

(Summer in Calcutta, p. 10)

They are involved in a relationship where there is no unison of heart, only bodies are united. She is freak because she pretends to love him in order to let him enjoy and satisfy his desires. Therefore, her flamboyant lust is a defence mechanism rather than her inner urge. There is a clear indication of spiritual void despite their

physical union. Such relationships manage to survive because of parental pressures and social compulsion only. This poem highlights the lack of human communication and the failure of man-woman relationship.

Another poem, "In Love", goes on with the same issue of lust voyeurism shown by her husband. She wonders whether she should call her sexual experience 'love'. She meditates on the fact that there is no room for love where lust prevails. Her husband neglects her feelings whenever they meet. She again remains silent while he enjoys triumphantly. "In Winter" again carries the symbol of the warmth of sexual act. Her soul again gropes for roots in his body. The physical desire devoid of love is also seen in her poem, 'A Relationship'. In this poem, the poet boldly claims that it was her desire that made him male and beautiful.

The poem "Spoiling the Name" is a plea against the patriarchal norms. Feminists believe that the roles of men and women are culturally constructed. There are set rules a society which cannot be broken. If anyone dares to do so, he/she will be called as a name spoiler. The connotation of the title "Spoiling the Name", is culture specific and refers to the importance given to the individual's societal role in Indian context. The poet explains how the name is a burden for her and how society restricts her movements because of it. She, therefore, asks:

"... why should this name, so
Sweet-sounding, enter at all the room
Where I go to meet a man
Who gives me nothing but himself, who
Calls me in his private hours
By no name..."

(Summer in Calcutta, p. 28)

A name is an abstraction, and in a woman's case borrowed from someone else. This poem highlights Mrs. Das' craftsmanship, but is in rhetorical tone. Calling her name as sweet-sounding is quite ironical because it is a sort of burden for her. Therefore, the poet asks rhetorical questions to know why she needs her name. Being a female, she has been married to a man who gives her nothing but calls her only for sex.

Women folk in our society feel restlessness and gloom because there are some contradictory pressures present in their life in the heightened form. If a woman goes out avoiding any social role she will be called with negative names. The conscious identity won by these women through education cannot find any meaningful expression in the roles imposed upon them. Men have some sort of privileges in our society like men could cultivate the realm of personal relationships as reserved area of their liberal ideals, women are said to have denied this privilege. There is no opportunity for a gifted female who wants to attain her freedom and individuality in the restricted field of male-female relationships.

Kamala Das, resists the sort of sensibility mentioned above and her poetry possesses a special energy and ringing appeal for us mostly because of her honesty and sincerity with which she contends her right to exist as an individual with a distinct identity and to keep her genuine self amongst of all the obstructive forces even if it involves shattering the moulds of traditional ethics and propriety. Her poetry lodges an intensive protest against the foolish restrictions which compel a sensitive and intelligent woman to suffer. Therefore, she raises her voice high enough which is one of the necessary doctrines of feminism and is merely to add to the rhapsody of the readers.

The poem, "An Apology to Gautama" constructs a dialectical contrariety between the ascetic and the sensual, between Gautama and her own man. The contrariness is basically between two kinds of faces, two kinds of voices, two kinds of eyes, and rather two modes of living:

"...while your arms hold
My woman-form, his hurting arms
Hold my very soul." (Summer in Calcutta, p. 19)

Therefore, the poem centers on this important contrast for its strength.

"The Fear of the Year" depicts the mood of dejection. It shows the sense of gloominess.

Meanwhile, "My Grandmother's House" also constitutes the mood of wild despair:

"...you cannot believe, darling,
Can you, that I live in such a house and
Was proud, and loved... I who have lost
My way and beg not at stranger's door to Receive love, at least in small change?"

(Summer in Calcutta, p. 15)

And in "The Wild Bougainvillea" we observe the sadness and how she yearned and longed constantly for a man from another town. In "The End of Spring", the poet, while expecting her lover's phone call, sinks into brooding over 'the fear of change'. And "Too Early the Autumn Sights" evokes a mood of premature desiccation within:

"Too early the Autumn sights
Have come, too soon my lips
Have lost their hunger, too soon
The singing birds have

Left." (Summer in Calcutta, p. 26)

Although this poem is of a conventional mood, yet Kamala Das manages to compress or squeeze out of common images a bit of visionary quality.

"Visitors to the City" is a impassioned etching of a scene composed of 'sights and sounds' offered by one morning on Strand Road. "The Punishment in Kindergarten" recounts the painful experience of poet during an outing at Victoria Gardens to which she and her classmates were taken, and the incident which followed it. She kept away from the company of the children. In this poem, the poet seems to be nostalgic about her childhood days. The poem depicts the poet's capability to smell the flowers as well as the pain of being slighted. Smelling the pain is quite significant and evocative. It also gives the clue about the feminist sense of isolation and her desire to be free. The significance of the poem lies in the sense of hurt inflicted on the child by the harsh words of the teacher and the children's laughter that aggravated it. The poet is able to reveal her repressed unconscious effectively in this poem. We are able to feel the pain of the child.

Mrs. Das uses poetry to present a feminist movement. From the inner care of her feminine consciousness, she discovers male-hegemony. Her search for identity is centred on sex, so she uses sex imagery to define her feminist voice. She is any woman who suffers from passive pathos in a male-dominated environment. Her unreserved mention of sex, her husband's pride in having met "sluts and Nymphomaniacs," a pair of lovely breasts, and a faint musk-rat odour in her sweat: all of these confessions deserve applause and appreciation, but her statement that "adultery is common among women living in cities" may not be positively agreed to because this viewpoint may harm women's overall outlook in the society. In reality, our society structure should make ample place for women who want to keep the sacredness of the husband-wife sex connection.

Her poem "The Siesta" is accompanied by sleepiness, such as 'The sun-lit tank,' which provides her with 'an anonymous tranquillity,' or dreams that 'shine pearl-white.' But the benefits of the mystery siesta are counterbalanced by her alleged inability to face this foreign world of gods and misdeeds. The poet, on the other hand, is more concerned with the vulnerability of the siesta's "anonymous tranquillity," its incapacity to endure the challenge of the awake world, than with the siesta itself. The poet's veiled dedication to it demonstrates the challenge's force.

In her title-piece, "Summer in Calcutta," Mrs. Das creates a self-contained ambience of exquisite luxury. The poet has a sensation of sensual repletion when he sees the sun in April in the poem. It contains a warm intoxication that both inspires and calms so that she utters the statement,

"my worries doze' and

...wee bubbles ring

My glass, like a bride's

Nervous smile, and meet

My lips. Dear, forgive

This moment is lull in

Wanting you, the blur

In memory."

(Summer in Calcutta, p. 48)

The poet revels in the feeling of fleeting victory over 'love's defeat.' It's a poem written by an Indian poet in response to the suffocating heat of the Indian summer. Kamala Das' reply is notable for her unconscious familiarity with the torture.

The poet's anguished sorrow for the awful coldness of heart is expressed in "With Its Quiet Tongue." "My Morning Tree," another poem, explores the classic theme of passionate longing for fulfilment. It has clear pictures, a well-organized framework, and a poignantly objectified tone. Though images like the 'ugly tree' and the 'fleshless limbs' of the tree provide little hope of this blossoming, the poet looks forward to the moment when the 'sudden flower' in it blooms. The poem is one of the dark despairs, and the sense of fulfilment that pervades poems such as 'Winter,' 'A Phone Call in the Morning,' 'Love,' 'Spoiling the Name,' and 'In Love,' is imagined and telescoped here but not without a cruel irony, for the flowering may not only be too late, but it may also be the end. Her needs and passions will blossom into a 'red, crimson morning flower' of death, thanks to the 'passive' limbs of her desires and passion.

"The Testing of the Sirens" comes to an appropriate conclusion, much like "The Dance of Eunuchs." The poet awakens with a sensation of physical loneliness after a night of love and lust, drives with someone who has "a pock-marked face," and awakens with a strong longing for love that is condemned to remain unfulfilled while taking her portrait. Her allegiance to either of the lovers is a rootless and detached loyalty of the moment, to the first (of the thrill) that of the limbs, and to the second (of the 'pock-marked face') that of 'a smile' that is 'such a disconnected thing'. The poem immortalises the poet's love for one of her family friends, an eighteen-year-old boy who used to take her to Victoria Memorial and photograph her against trees and running water, while also entertaining her with Hindi cinema songs.

In her collection *Summer in Calcutta*, we get poetry like "The Flag," "Forest Fire," "The Wild Bougainvillea," "Someone Else's Song," and "An Introduction." There is an attempt in these poems to climb above the 'private voice' and portray a greater panorama of experience. As in "Someone Else's Song," the strategy almost always involves assuming a larger persona:

"I am a million, million people
Talking all at once, with voices
Raised in clamour, like maids At village-wells."

(*Summer in Calcutta*, p. 31)

Or, in "The Stranger and I":

"I've seen you in restaurant, all gay
And smoke-filled, on the seat behind
The pillar, drinking joylessly your
Sweetened tea, while your left hand
Softly trembling, crouches on the
Table clock like a wounded bird..."

(*Summer in Calcutta*, p. 31)

The tone of the poems in this collection concentrates on betrayal, portraying the poet as a prisoner of her own loneliness and solitude, exacerbated by complex moods. The poem "The Wild Bougainvillea," for example, depicts the fulfilment of a specific emotional need as a vital diversion from her misery and loneliness. "It's a beautiful world, but it's also a world full of diversions". "An Introduction" is a wonderful expression of her poetic credo, her attitude toward language and experience, and it is an open and funny act of self-revelation. Her poem's central theme is the ability to express herself freely. She deviates from the beaten road in order to reveal her genuine self. They told her to 'fit in.' The categorizers yelled, 'Belong!' She, on the other hand, is deafeningly deafening. Indeed, her alienation has grown from 'critics, friends, and visiting relatives' who urge, 'Don't write in English,' to a bigger and more global alienation based on sexual, social, and aesthetic perspectives:

"I met a man, loved him, call

Him not by name, he is every man Who wants a woman, just as I am every Woman who seeks love."

(*Summer in Calcutta*, p. 60)

'An Introduction' opens with the speaker, Das, claiming to know all of India's male leaders. Their names have become a part of her, a testament to their immense power. This contrasts sharply with her feelings of powerlessness as she grew up and married at the age of sixteen. She wrestles with her individuality and is finally able to leave the customary position of wife behind. Das outlines how men might travel through the environment with a strong sense of self. They are free to make their own decisions and express their feelings. She pushes back against this way of life in the final words, declaring that she feels things that do not belong to the guy she loves. She, too, has the ability to be 'I'.

In 'An Introduction,' Das delves into the issues of Feminism like equal rights, freedom, and marriage. This poem is a strong feminist message that supports all women's right to choose.

However, it is obvious from the above that Mrs. Das' poetry, particularly in '*Summer in Calcutta*,' are imbued with a feeling of universality that is imposed rather than natural for her. Personal moods and feelings are revealed to have outnumbered impersonal ones in this collection, because prolonged universality is beyond the poet's reach. She is discovered to be in her own universe, which is dedicated to opposing patriarchal hegemony.

The Descendants (1967), Kamala Das' second lyrical collection, has twenty-three poems. Her favourite theme of sexual love is seen in all of these poems. This method of sex treatment causes a woman's carnal desire to manifest. Also prominent in this anthology is the subject of death. It's death-aware, if not death-obsessed, in general. Some of these poems, such as "Invitation," "Composition," and "The Descendants," are solemnised by compassion or humility. In actuality, there appears to be a craving for pseudo-metaphysical calm and an inability to deal with emotional defeat and dissatisfaction, as well as a sense of nothingness:

"To be frank,

I have failed. I feel my age and my Uselessness."

(*The Descendants*, p. 41)

As we can see in her poem "A Request," the poetess is rhapsodised by a sense of the simmering "secret" and "isolation" that "I am so alone" and that "life is a colourless design of disintegrating patterns", as is shown in the following lines:

"When I die

Do not throw the meat and bone away

But pile them up

And

Let them tell

By their smell

That life was worth
On this earth What love was worth
In the end."

(The Descendants, p. 11)

The above lines highlight the poetess' life's insignificance and meaninglessness. The sterility she is experiencing and the circumstance she has been put into is depicted with a sour and bitter tone. Discontent is evident in poems like "Shut Out That Moon" and "Neutral Tones." The defiance of the whole positives in life is reminiscent of Thomas Hardy's poetical tone.

"The Descendants," the title poem, borders on nihilism, moving the poet in the opposite direction of "Death Brings No Loss" (Summer in Calcutta), which suggests faith in the essential continuity of life. 'We are not going to be redeemed, or made new', says the poem's final line.

Another poem, "The Suicide," contains weak portions and lacks dramatic cohesiveness. It's written as if the poet and the sea are having a discussion. This poem's subject substance is centred on the poet's thought or recommended suicide, yet the poem ultimately rejects it via a renewed sense of life. According to her, the body and the soul are inextricably linked, and she is unable to choose between physical and spiritual death. The sea is a constant source of diversion for her, a nagging threat that tempts her to negation:

"The sea is garrulous today. Come in, Come in. What do you loose by dying, and Besides, your losses are my gains."

(The Descendants, p. 20)

With a hint of sensuality, this poem offers her dissolution.

Another poem, "A Request," is fraught with the sensation of "death," which finds a parallelism in 'Dear night, be my tomb' of "Substitute" and merges into the irrevocable blackness of our own doom, of the wounds and the cross, of the fire and 'the hungry earth,' which will annihilate us in the end.

We see the duality of death in "The Invitation": although the water gives one sort of death, a full negation, her lover, whom she can't resist, offers another, metaphysical death, i.e., the experience of "laying on a funeral pyre or with a burning forehead." The dictum she uses conjures up images of madness and torment, which seem to be associated with her more modern treatment of sexual love. The poet rejects the sea's path in this poem, preferring to shrink or expand in her own manner. Despite the fact that the man has passed away, the poet is comforted by the recollection of her encounter. She'll never forget the moment of sexual love's self-contained intensity:

"All thought that summer's afternoons we lay
On beds, our limbs inert, cells expanding
Into throbbing suns. The heart had Blotted our thoughts..."

(The Descendants, p. 20)

The lines above depict an explicit suffusing organic warmth that pervades the scene and enlivens the oppressive heat of summer days.

The poem "Ferns" captures sexual love in an image of self-devouring and self-mocking intensity, implying that there is a sense in which her adoration of physical love is tinged with disenchantment. The poem, "Convicts" is an example of physical love in the most basic terms of physical labour and heat, as well as a physical experience depicted below:

"That was the only kind of love,
This hacking at eachother's parts
Like Convicts hacking, breaking clods
At noon. We were earth under hot
Sun. There was a burning in our
Veins and the cool mountain nights did
Nothing to lessen heat. When he And I were one, we were neither Male nor female."

(The Descendants, p. 26)

This is, without a doubt, a sensuous poetry piece that hurls sexual suggestion at the readers.

"Substitute" is a poem that oscillates between melancholy and acrimony. It reveals the need to adhere to a hypocritical society's conventions, which exacerbates one's sense of emptiness. The poem has a lot of pathos, and the meditative refrain is sardonic:

"It will be right if I join clubs
And flirt a little over telephone.
It will be alright, it will be all right.
I am the type that endures,
It will be all right, it will be all right
It will be alright between the world and me."

(The Descendants, p. 7)

The image of crows waving wildly but aimlessly in the sky 'with loud cries' breaks the spell only to pave the ground for the suggestion of the man and woman's absence of mental touch' in "Our Bodies After Love-making." This poem has a tone similar to Prufrock's 'Love Song.' Its quest of love is purely mechanical and devoid of significance.

Another poem taking up with the same theme of sexual love is "The Looking Glass". Let's observe the following line from this poem:

"... notice the perfection

Of his limbs, his eyes reddening under
Shower, the shy walk across the bathroom floor,
Dropping towels, and the jerky way he
Urinate. All the fond details that make
Him male and your only man. Gift him all,
Gift him what makes you woman, the scent of
Long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts,
The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your Endless female hungers."
(The Descendants, p. 25)

According to the poetess, if a woman is honest about her goals and needs, it will be easy for her to find a guy who will adore her. She should go near to him for physical pleasure. She should not be afraid to stand naked in front of the mirror with him, so that he can plainly see that he is stronger and she is weaker, younger, and more beautiful. This will feed his male ego and pique his interest in the lesser sex. She should also appreciate his compliments on her youthful looks. She should point out to him that he is physically perfect and note that his eyes are turning red with passion in order to gratify his male ego. She should also take note of his hesitant walk across the bathroom floor, towelled up, and jerky urinating. In short, she should admire him for all of his positive qualities and make him feel like he is her "one man" for sexual fulfilment.

She should completely surrender herself to him as a lady true to her character. The perfume of her long hair, the musk of her breasts, and the warm shock of her monthly blood should all be offered to him. She should let him have his fill of sexual pleasure and gratify all of her "endless female hungers" in the process. He'd then have the impression that she's not only satisfying his lust, but also her own.

Therefore, the poem "The Looking Glass" is a psychedelic striptease. It conjures up images of a lusty interaction between men and women. Nothing, not even the unpleasant and forbidden, is kept hidden from the reader. In the first section, there is a subtle psychological examination of masculine mentality, while the second portion is completely dominated by a feminine awareness. The poem's overall effect is one of sterility and futility in sexual love.

The poem "Captive" depicts Kamala Das' love as "an empty gift," "a gilded empty container," and herself as "the muffled murmur at the centre," a prisoner of the womb's blinding hunger. Its tonic meaning is uncertain, and the notion of sexual love is more closely associated with the joys of creation and delivery. The similar kind of theme may be seen in her "Jaisurya," which combines the narrative and also details the whole range of emotions that precede and follow the birth of a son. It weaves a pattern of sensation that is held up by the joy of creation by combining light and darkness, fire and water. It's worth noting that meaningful things happen to the poetess around or around noontime, when the sun is at its purest whiteness. There was a day when the child was separated from him, as evidenced by the sentence "separated from darkness that was mine."

Conclusion:

Kamala Das, in my opinion, possesses a strong sense of modernism. She writes with a defiant spirit, challenging outdated traditions and norms. She protests against the custom-ridden and conventional society dominated by men, as does every modernist who is a rebel. She would not wear her hair long, but rather cut it short and wear slacks, which is enough of an indication to challenge the existing order and begin examining the traits of a feminist. She found herself in a patriarchal world with archaic customs and patriarchal dominance. These males appeared to her to be amusing, nasty, and haughty. They were also self-centered men who attempted to stand out from the crowd of ladies. In the hands of men, women, on the other hand, are toys. Kamala Das was unable to acclimatise to the situation and, as a result, she used her poetry to highlight the sensitivity of her mind. She believes that modern women require freedom, self-respect, and a willingness to take on responsibility. Her writings crystallised the buried tensions in the thoughts of women like Kamala Das who are hesitant to speak. As a result, Kamala Das has freely expressed her emotions via her poetry, causing her to become both controversial and famous around the world.

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