

# Kamala Das: A Bold Woman who Wrote Poems with Transparency

Ms. Chanda Kumawat

M.A. (English)

**Abstract:** Kamala Das is one of the bold contemporary Indian women poets. She is one of the major poets in Indian English poetry mainly known for her fiery voice and transparency in her poems. Her poetry is characterized by frankness, clarity and openness. She reflects her restlessness as a sensitive woman moving in the male-dominated society. Her poetry reflects the images of disease destruction, helplessness, frustration and rejection.

Love is a great tragedy which she had to face in her whole life. In her poems we can see search for true love of sexual relationship. She in her poems confesses a number of things related to her own self Love and sex occupies a very important place in Kamala Das poetry. In fact, it is the search of true love which inspires her to write and expresses her feelings and sufferings. Kamala Das poetry is a picture of her own experience of her own experience and observation.

**INTRODUCTION-** Kamala Surayya (31 March 1934-31 May 2009) was born in Punnayukulam, Trissur district in Kerala. Her one time pen name is Madhavikutty and married name is Kamala Das, She gives an honest and open treatment of female sexuality through her fiery poems. She is the recipient of several prizes and awards: Asian World poetry for literature, Sahitya Academy Awards and the PEN Asian Poetry Prize. She was shortlisted for Nobel Prize in 1984. Her collection of poetry includes *Summer in Calcutta*, *The Descendants*, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*, *Collected Poems*, *The Best of Kamala Das* and *Only the Soul Knows How to Sing*. She has also written a daring autobiography, *My Story*.

**KEYWORDS** – Boldness, Feminist, Transparency, Sexual desire.

Kamala Das introduces herself in the poem *An Introduction*

“I am India, very brown born in Malabar,  
I speak three languages, write in two, dream in one”

Kamala Das is mainly known as a poet in Indian writing in the literary world of English but she is also a writer of fiction. She wrote most short stories in Malayalam, her mother tongue but she has also written a few stories in English. Das has certainly studied Victorian models and accepted sex and sensuality as an integral part. Many of her poems are suffused with warmth and passion, with heat of an unrequited love and desire. She is the best known contemporary Indian writer. Writing in two languages English and Malayalam. In the above stated lines the poetess celebrates her rich Indian culture and heritage. She says that she is a native of India. She can speak three languages – her mother tongue, English and Hindi and write in two languages – her native language and English. However she can speak dream in only one language as dreams have a universal language. These lines also show that she is well educated at par with any educated man.

**IN THE POEM 'LOVE'**

Kamala Das who dislikes her father for having imposed on her a marriage of no choice of hers, finds the paternal influence so ingrained in her that she looks for a father-figure among men around, as she reveals in “GLASS”

I've misplaced a father  
somewhere, and I look  
For him now everywhere

Kamala Das could not get the parental love in her childhood so she kept looking for love when she grew up. She reveals the poetess's complete happiness and contentment in love. Here she expresses her desire for a father's love and care which was not fulfilled as a child. She as a woman wants support and love from her father which could be strength for her.

The agony of not finding a true lover and a sense of defeat oppress her and she finds no way out of this limbo of sex. She becomes aware of the fact that reliance on body cannot carry her far enough and it is a trap which prevents her from experiencing true love.

As she reveals in

*The Prisoner*

As the convicts studies  
His prisons geography  
I study the trappings  
Of your body, dear love,  
For I must some day find  
An escape from its snare

She discovers that, after all the pleasure body offers are of cloying and ephemeral nature. A love which flourished and thrives on

body is bound to wither with it and the search for true love in a world of philanderers is a futile exercise. So she turns to the mythical world of Krishna and Vrindavan to seek lasting love and fulfillment. She imagines herself as Radha and finds comfort in the arms of imaginary Krishna.

The poem is an extended conceit of the imprisonment of the female mind. However the female persona is not alone in this kind of suffering.

The poem is a poignant exposure of the woman's alienation from her own body on being abused. Despite her refusal to be treated as a mere body she does not find herself socially equipped to prevent it. Her search for Krishna is a search of bodiless; outside the orbit of her relationship with him she is only a prisoner, a convict. Her own body is a cause of her bondage and hence she rejects it. The male body holds her captive and damages her self esteem.

The poet's disillusionment finds a more controlled and cryptic expression in her poem "A request". Its one of her most structured poems and should be seen as an elegy.

When I die,  
Do not throw,  
The meant and poems away,  
But pile them up,  
And let them tell,  
By their smell,  
What life was worth on this earth,  
What love was worth in the end.

Alienation and search for love are central to the poetry of Das. Evidently the two are in an antecedent relationship. *Request* is a poem reflecting life and death. It gives reader a thought that the poet is longing to die or preparing for it in advance.

**K.R. Sreenivasa Iyengar** once remarked about her that she treated the poetry as  
"An attractive protective or defiant cover to hide the nakedness of the self, but more often than not an engine of catharsis, a way of a agonized self knowledge"

## CONCLUSION

Kamala Das writes in her usual frank open mindedness about married life or man woman relationship in many of her poems. As a revolutionary writer Das always stands apart and has carved a niche of herself. She wants to live a life of can be flesh instead and blood and love a man who could have same kind of passion for her as she has for him this is not crime and she argues on behalf of it strongly. She even changed her religion to find a sense of security. Her poetry has created a new kind of space in Indian English poetic tradition, especially from the point of view of her use of imagery, words and expressions. The confessional poems are intensely personal and highly subjective. There is no 'persona' in her poems. The themes are nakedly embarrassing and focus exclusively upon the pain, anguish and ugliness of life at the expense of its pleasure and beauty. Kamala Das voice the voice of voiceless women by articulating the despair and longing of fellow women through a series of feminist imagery.

278, naag marg  
Chandpole Bhinder ki haveli  
Udaipur (Raj.)

## Works Cited:

- Das, Kamala: Summer in Calcutta. New Delhi : Everest Press. 1965  
Das, Kamala: The Poetic Pilgrimage. New Delhi : Nice Printing Press. 2005  
Bali, Purnima. "Poetry of Protest and Confession : A Study of Kamala Das." The Criterion(2013):1-5  
Das, Kamala: The Old Playhouse and Other Poems. Madras: Oriented Longman Ltd.1973