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# Exploration of Kamla Das Poetry in the Study of “The Decedents”

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper is an attempt of to understand the vision of Kamala Das' poem named The Decedents from the feministic point of view. In a number of Das' poetry, there is an intense voice of self and sufferings. The poems are not only a mirror of her own world but also a kind confronts with society which is primarily a patriarchal in nature. The sensitivity and emotions flowed in the present poem is enough to understand the ceaseless boundaries of emotive senses.

**KEY WORDS:** Self, the Decedents, Patriarchal.

## I.INTRODUCTION

In this context, it must be admitted that she was one of the writers whose artistic output such as poetry and novels helped to put Indian writing in English in the world arena. The seed of Indian Writing in English was sown during the period of the British rule in India. Now the seed has blossomed into an ever green tree, fragrant flowers and ripe fruits. The fruits are being tasted not only by the native people, but they are also being 'chewed and digested' by the foreigners. It happened only after the constant caring, pruning and feeding.

Gardeners' like Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, R.K.Narayan, Raja Rao - to name only a few, looked after the tender plant night and day. In modern time, it is guarded by a number of writers who are getting awards and accolades all over the world. Indian Writing in English, from being a singular and exceptional, rather gradual native flare - up of geniuses, it has turned out to be a new form of Indian culture and voice in which India converses regularly.

Indian Writers - poets, novelists, essayists, and dramatists have been making momentous and considerable contributions to world literature since pre - Independence era, the past few years have witnessed a gigantic prospering and thriving of Indian English Writing in the global. It has already put an imprint as an independent status. In the realm of world Literature. Wide ranges of themes are dealt with in Indian Writing in English. While this literature continues to reflect Indian culture, tradition, social values and even Indian history through the depiction of life in India and Indians living elsewhere, recent Indian English fiction has been trying to give expression to the Indian experience of the modern predicaments.

There are critics and commentators in England and America who appreciate Indian English novels. Prof. M. K. Naik remarks "one of the most notable gifts of English education to India is prose fiction for though India was probably a fountain head of story-telling, the novel as we know today was an importation from the west".

In the long line literary luminaries in Indian Writing in English, Rabindranath Tagore is a celebrated name in the sphere of English literature. He was born in 1861 and died in the year 1941 spanning long years of creativity. His creative genius is so much accounting and his literary output is so much rich and varied that the phrase 'myriad - minded', which Mathew Arnold had used for Shakespeare, can aptly be used for him also. He won Nobel Prize for literature in 1913, for his immortal poetic work Gitanjali (1913). Besides being a great universal poet, the genius Tagore is also a novelist, dramatist, Short - Story writer, musician, philosopher, painter, educationalist, reformer and critic in every field and had earned a niche for himself.

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## II. INDIAN WOMEN WRITERS

In the twentieth century, women's writing was considered as a powerful medium of modernism and feminist statements. The last two decades have witnessed phenomenal success in feminist writings of Indian English literature. Today is the generation of those women writers who have money and are mostly western education. Their novels consist of the latest burning issues related with women as well as those issues that exist in the society since long.

The publishers feel that the literature actually survives because of these types of bold topics and commercials used by the women novelists. They describe the whole world of women with simply stunning frankness. Their write - ups give a glimpse of the unexplored female psyche, which has no accessibility. The majority of these novels depict the psychological suffering of the frustrated housewife.

Critiquing about Kamala Das' poetry is most moving and tortured. There is a sexual 'brazenness to her persona', which barely hides her inmost ferment. Credited as the most outspoken - and even controversial writer, Kamala Das now earned fame as the 'voice of women's sexuality'. Apart from writing in English, Das also wrote under the pen name Madhavikutty in Malayalam before her conversion to Islam ten years ago. She had not only established herself as an English writer. Her popularity in Kerala was credited mostly to her short stories and the autobiographical *My Story*, which was translated into 15 languages, a book where she openly discussed her unsatisfactory sexual life with her husband Madhava Das.

## III. KAMLA DAS POETRY IN THE STUDY OF "THE DECEDENTS"

The second volume by Kamala Das, namely *The Descendants* has 23 poems in all. In this collection, there are many poems which are *Death Conscious*, *Death Obsessed*, *the Descendants*, *the Invitation* and *The Composition*. These are some of the finest poems in this collection. *The Composition* includes total seven units and all units vary in length. In the first section, Kamala Das very beautifully explains that how she faces the sea and how she lay beside her grandmother when she notices the breaking surf at nights. Loss of innocence, the discovery of horror, the tragedy of growth is all what second unit speaks about.

In the third unit tells of, sexual interactions and marriage with both men and women. This unit ends with the saying that poetess misses her granny. The fourth unit describes about the similarity of all sexual encounters and external world to the soul. The fifth unit is about love between a grandmother and a grand-daughter. This unit recalls the time when narrator's grandmother invited her for a night to spend with her in the old house. The sixth unit makes us aware of dangerous world of marriage, friendship, prostitution and enmity.

The final unit explains that crumbling of the self brings no rest and also that pains continue and immortality of consciousness is a certainty. "The freedom to decompose" is the only freedom.

The poems of the speaker go through early memory and also through pain of growing:

"The tragedy of life is not death but growth; the child growing into adult/and growing out of needs/ discovering/that the old have black

rimmed nails and scalps that emanate/a sweet, mouldy smell./In the years that followed/ I was busy growing/I had then/no time at all for the sea.

But, there was off and on a seascape in my dreams/in the water/sloshing up/and sliding down." Tone of Hardian pessimism was found in "Shut Out that Moon" and "Neutral Tones." "The Descendants" revolves around nihilism. The poem, "The Suicide" explains that constant distraction can be found in the sea: "The sea is garrulous today. Come in,  
Come in what do you lose by dying and

Besides, yours losses are my gains." Sea offers one kind of death, and the strains of death explicit in "A Request" and in "The Invitation." Another poem, namely "Convicts" shows a physical experience that belongs to no intellectual

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language and also shows physical love in the elemental terms. "Substitute" is another poem of both truculent and poignant. "Glass" has a theme of conventions of a hypocritical society which makes one's feeling of emptiness more painful.

Another poem, "Captive" explains the love of Kamala Das as "an empty gift" and "A glided empty container." This poem also describes Kamala Das as the prisoner of "the womb's blinded hunger, the muted whisper at the Core." Combination of the meditative and the narrative details of whole gamut can be found in "Jaisurya."

Kamala Das is no doubt a love poet. We can find her poems themes of unfulfilled love and pining for love. This theme sets very well for "The Dance of the Eunuchs." In this poem speaker describes an objective correlation in the dance of the eunuchs. Passion, sexual drought and rottenness was stimulated by the action of shirts going round and round. The contrast remains sustained all through the poem. The unfulfilled and unquenchable love of the women can be related with the dance of the eunuchs which was a dance of the sterile. "The Freaks" also has the same theme.

Kamala Das was totally transformed after eating his husband's magical loaf like one happened in *Alice in the Wonderful*. This helps her husband to embalm her with lust. But it's not only lust what she is pinning for. She also wants sympathy and understanding with a mature person to have an identity with him and above all.

Kamala Das greatness as love poet comes from the fact that her love is rooted from her personal experience. She was married at the early age of 16 and soon after her marriage she discovered that she was tied to a hollow relationship which can't be untied. Love and marriage need not to be mutually exclusive, but in the vision of Kamala Das, it has to be proved. Account of her love experiences may not be true but it surely will be truly emotional.

No doubt, her love poetry, her treatment of the sexual love and the human body was shocking and against the society and orthodoxy. From this, we can conclude that Kamala Das was a very frank and open minded women and poet. Now, this was very obvious that she refused to follow the traditional role of a woman which a wife was expected to play.

In the poems like "Love", "In Love", "The Prisoner" relationship of man-women is shown as the pleasant escape from the stress and trivialities of day to day life. Although the concept of "Happy Prison" is a Romantic literature but then also Kamala Das was able to give this poem an un-Romantic twist:

"Your body is my prison, Krishna.

I cannot see beyond it

Your darkness blinds me

Your love words shut out the wise world's din."

And again,

"As the convict studies his prison's geography

I study the tappings

of your body, dear love

for, I must someday find

an escape from its snare"

Kamala Das is serious about love and a realist when dealing with her own lover and she understands, "What is love":

"While I wait for your phone call, I do not

know who to believe, You, who say who love,

Or the voice that tells me no, no, no ...

... What is the use

of love, all this love, if all it gives is

Fear, you the fear of hurting you?"

"Until I found you

I wrote verse, drew pictures

and went out with friends for walks.

Now that I love you,

curled like an old mongrel

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my life lies content  
in you..."

The present state of mind of Kamala Das is such an unclear memory that she is unable to distinguish between her lovers of youth and now she can't declare anyone superior or inferior:

"At my age there are no longer any  
Home comings. Nothing can bring  
Back a twinkle in these eyes that  
Took root in memory  
During those innumerable  
Trips behind a dear one are hoarse. No,  
I cannot recollect the face  
Of the man who told me he loved  
My poetry, just yesterday,  
At someone's party, or his name  
I see only those faces that.  
Have returned of dust, or my child's  
As it looked fifteen years ago.  
My mind sleeps, I watch the road lights  
Of vehicles love on the dark  
Looks of night like women's shuttles..."

The definition of love for Kamala Das is different from other poets as she thinks that experience of love is beyond sex:  
"We played once a husband me, my lover and I,  
His body needing mine  
dis ageing body in its pride needing the need for mine And  
Each time his lust was quietened."

Das unusually alert antennae were turned towards authenticity in life and she subjected each being too sensitive radar. Human beings are not mere abstractions to her. Her dominated being over society's norm can easily be seen in her works. This kind of boldness reflects her wide range of intellectualism. That was actually tragedy of her life.

#### IV.CONCLUSION

Here, Kamala Das openly criticizes religion and she regards it as ancient virus. Kamala Das' literary merit has been recognized and her poem finds honorable place in the Anthology of Indo-English poetry. She is a poetess of confessional mode. A confessional poet deals with personal experiences and Kamala Das is not exception to this. Kamala Das confesses her guilt and crime. She keeps nothing secret in her heart. She is quite alive to feminine sensibility and she gives its expression more nakedly than that any other Indian woman poetess does. With a frankness and openness Kamala Das expresses her need for love. To conclude, Kamala Das is a great and original poet with distinctive poetic personality of her own. Although some critics say that Kamala Das lacks self-control and not knowing when to stop, she always remains unequalled and matchless Indian poet for openness.

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