

Male-Domination, Identity Quest and Motherhood: A Thematic Study Of Select Works Of Kamala Das

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ABSTRACT: Kamala Das, one of the stalwarts of confessional writings, has always been criticized for her excessive openness and pervasiveness, but the detailed analysis of her works shows how she has achieved her goal in presenting the authentic picture of women in a male-dominated society. When other writers attempted to give an appealing sketch of women in the society of Kerala, Das concentrated on the psyche of women-herself, her dreams and aspirations which would be offensive to patriarchal society. Das' stories are not about revealing the private life of a woman but it aims at unveiling the "real women"- the women with strength and might to defy the societal norms to establish her identity as a human being, and an abode of love and affection.

KEYWORDS: Male-domination, Patriarchy, Identity Quest, Family and Motherhood

I. INTRODUCTION

Today let this paper receive my dripping blood. Let me write like one not in the least burdened by the thoughts about the future, turning each word into a negotiation with my life lived so far. I like to call this poetry. I like to call this poetry even if my words lose their music when, after raising my innards a beautiful liquid turbulence, they come to surface in the relatively solid contours of prose. I had always longed for the strength necessary to write this. But poetry does not grow ripe for us, we have to grow ripe enough for poetry.-Kamala Das (*My Story* viii)

For Kamala Das writing was an art of poetry in consensus with Wordsworth's definition of poetry as spontaneous overflow of emotion. The deepest thoughts, anguish, qualms and longings that harboured the psyche of woman found its utmost expression in her novels, short stories and poetry. When other woman writers refined from penning down the most intimate account of the personal life of a woman, Das employed her own personal life that erected a robust attachment between the author and the reader. Being a member of an orthodox Nair family of north Kerala, she was obliged to follow the conventions that prevailed in her family, "dress in sarees, be girl or be wife, they cried/ Be embroiderer, cook or/ a quareller with servants" ("An Introduction", *The old playhouse and other stories* 26). But Das followed a different suite. For her life was not a sachet of deceit, vanity and customary, but a vase brimming with love, hope and aspirations. When the so called love was denied she decided on adopting an unconventional approach to life defying the rotten ethnicity of a Hindu family. The woe of a desolated woman as a daughter, wife, mother and even as a prostitute, in a patriarchal society craft the major bottom line of her novels, she retorts with rage in her poem "The Conflagration."
"Women, is this happiness, this lying buried
Beneath a man? Its time again to come alive,
The world extends a lot beyond his six-foot
frame." (*The Descendants*)

Her novels unravel the core of a woman's ulterior perception which couldn't find any spot in the works of other woman writers of Malayalam. Be it a aristocratic woman marred by vanity or a middle class or low class woman taunted by fate, all women characters of her novels bear the same thoughts and the very same abhorrence against a male-dominated society.

II. WOMAN UNDER THE CLUTCHES OF A PHALLOCENTRIC SOCIETY

*...You called me wife,
I was taught to break saccharine into your tea and
To offer at the right moment the vitamins,
Cowering beneath your monstrous ego, I ate
The magic loaf and became a dwarf. I lost my will*

and reason...

- Kamala Das (*The Old Playhouse I*)

In her fictional autobiography *My Story*, Das narrates the despondent existence of a wife and a mother. In this work despite her personal life, she also comprises the anecdotes of other women related to her family, who are subdued under the ideals of a patriarchal society. Woman was a block-head, a sensuous figure that gratify the men's sexual ventures. Das narrates such a situation in her work *My Story* (21) I have heard my grand-uncle tell his wife that she was the most empty-headed woman he had known. She used to laugh melodiously at such comments. At night she enslaved him with her voluptuous body. So she could well afford to humour him in the day. Each night she came to our house accompanied by her maids and a lantern, looking like a bride. And, she walked up the steep staircase of the gatehouse to meet her famous husband in their lush bedroom, kept fragrant with incense and jasmine garlands...

In her short novel *A Doll for the Child Prostitute*, child prostitutes who haven't ripe enough to know the sexual relationships become a mere pound of flesh for old men chasing the sexual adventures. These young girls accept this verdict as a "punishment" for being born as a girl child in the society. They believe that they are indebted to surrender before the carnal desire of these men as they are born as a female child who is a "burden" to a male-dominated society. Here Das equates a birth of a female child to a creation of an object of sensual pleasure for men. The character child Seetha labels men as lustful "dog" who should be obeyed or the consequence would be disastrous. Woman is liable to every immoral actions of man. Though man is a culprit, it is the innocent woman who is punished and scorned by the society for a dissolute behaviour. Das exemplifies this fact with an incident from her childhood where a servant is expelled from her ancestral home due to the depraved behaviour of her relative

It was during this period of discontent that her swinging gait caught the fancy of a rich relative of ours who began to lure her into a vacant house every noon to coax her to part with her morals. When his ardour grew, he began, Profumowise, to write little missiles of letters, shooting them at her while she walked beneath his balcony. One of those cloying dispatches fell into the hands of my grandmother who promptly dismissed the girl from our service. (*My Story* 22) So here who is penalized? The man who pestered the woman to forfeit her chastity, to satisfy his sexual urge or the woman who ignored his advances and preserved her purity? This query remains unsolved as long as we live in a phallo-centric civilization disintegrated by age-old morals to suppress the woman. Similar situation can also be traced in her short novel *Rathriyude Pathavinyasam* where the principal character Sree Devi attempts to rebuke a man who advances to poke her while traveling in a crowded bus, she is being scorned and silenced by other fellow travelers for being unruly with an old man. Here woman is portrayed an offender whereas the guilty man is backed by others impressed by his humble justification. In her short novel *Aatukattil*, society criticizes the fallen woman Omana for luring an unmarried man to a sexual relationship, though the truth is different. She was actually victimized by that unmarried man to pay his vengeance on her invalid husband. So if you are a woman never think about offending the society for you will be succumbed to endure the dire impact of its fury! But if you are a man you are free to live the way you love! This is the inevitable truth of a phallo-centric society presented by Das in her novels. In old Nair families woman regarded sex a principal phobia associated with "violence" and "bloodshed." It was a nightmare for young girls to get married to an old man. These old men exploited the immatured body of their young wives with aggression and belligerence. Das narrates such an incident in her autobiography-The rich man stopped seeing our former kitchen maid and soon married a moon-faced cousin who quarreled with him every night, sobbing so hysterically that his uncles had to knock at his bedroom door and intervene.No wonder the women of the best Nair families never mentionedsex. It was their principal phobia. They associated it with violence and bloodshed. They had been fed on the stories of Ravana who perished due to his desire for Sita and of Kichaka, who was torn to death by Draupadi's legal husband Bhima only because he coveted her. It was customary for a Nair girl to marry when she was hardly out of her childhood and it was also customary for the much older husband to give her a rude shock by his sexual haste on the wedding night. (*My Story* 23).

Woman is an abode of sensual pleasure for men and they employ all their masculine authority to invade it. Sexual harassment and humiliation owing to it, carry a significant space in her autobiography. Married to a man of her father's age, at the age of 14, Das suffers a tremendous trauma to overcome the constant disgrace beneath her husband's carnal appetite. Wherever he found me alone in a room, he began to plead with me to bare my breasts and if I did not, he turned brutal and crude. His hands bruised my body and left blue and red marks on the skin. He told me of the sexual exploits he had shared with some of the maidservants in his house in Malabar.

The poor women born of a peasant stock were accustomed to a clumsy rapid mating like that of the birds, for their men had very little time to spare for niceties of any kind since all the incomplete chores waited for them, the hoeing, the ploughing, the chopping of firewood and the feeding of livestock. (*My Story* 79). There was no love or emotional attachment between the man and the woman. The more the woman craved for emotional fulfillment, the more he craved for her ever opulent flesh! The woman owed to man for his financial aid and shelter by being a part of his sexual venture at night. She was a mere partner in that voyage, a slave who could be whipped and thrashed by her master! Or she would be left starving to death. Das narrates her agony-

At night he was like a chieftain who collected the taxes due to him from his vassal, simply and without exhilaration. All the Parijata that I wove in my curly hair was wasted. The taking was brutal and brief. The only topic of conversation that delighted him was sex and I was ignorant in the study of it. (*My Story* 89)

Extra-marital relationship was yet another issue discussed by Das in her autobiography and in her novels *Manasi* and *Aatukattil*. Women in her novels, search for love outside wed-lock, when it is denied in their nuptial bed. Sometimes her characters indulge in such immoral relationships for personal gains as they find it is the sole way to taste the glory of success. One can find such a character in her novel *Manasi*, where the principal character part with her morals to reach the zenith of her political career. But in her autobiography, the author indulges in relationship outside wed-lock, to gratify her craving for love and care which are renounced in her legitimate life.

I had expected him to take me in his arms and stroke my face, my hair, my hands and whisper loving words. I had expected him to be all that I wanted my father to be, and my mother. I wanted conversation, companionship and warmth. Sex was from my thoughts. I had hoped that he would remove with one sweep of his benign arms the loneliness of my life... (*My Story* 80)

Woman remained a lone survivor of sexual and monetary gain for man in her novels. If he figured out anything worthwhile, it was her tempting mass of flesh and blood, and her father's affluence. The author comprehends this painful truth from her husband in her autobiography, and his empty love drives her to illegitimate relationships.

I yearned for a kind word, a glance in my direction. It became obvious to me that my husband had wished to marry me only because of my social status and the possibility of financial gain. A coldness took hold of my heart then. I knew then that if love was what I had looked for in marriage I would have to look for it outside its legal orbit. I wanted to be given an identity that was loveable.

When he returned to Bombay the first letter that he wrote was not to me but to a girl cousin who had allowed him to hug her while he walked towards my home in the evenings. I made up my mind to be unfaithful to him, at least physically. (*My Story* 90)

Daughters were a nuisance to a family of a patriarchal society. Following her physical maturation, parents become too anxious about her whereabouts and friends. Gradually she turns out to be a vestigial organ which must be removed before it ruptures off. Das complains, "I was a burden and a responsibility neither my parents nor my grandmother could put up with for long. Therefore with the blessing of all, our marriage was fixed." (*My Story* 77). After marriage she adorns a new role as a conventional faithful wife impressing her husband with her devoted gestures, gentle words and charming beauty. She loses her identity and rationale and her presence shrinks to a role of a servant, a cook and an edible cuisine for her husband's carnal hunger.

My life had been planned and its course charted by my parents and relatives. 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. I would be a middle-class housewife, and walk along the vegetable shop carrying a string bag and wearing faded chappals on my feet. I would beat my thin children when they asked for expensive toys, and make them scream out for mercy. I would wash my husband's cheap underwear and hang it out to dry in the balcony like some kind of a national flag, with wifely pride... (*My Story* 81)

Woman was denied progress in her marital life and in her professional life. She has to follow the customs of an archaic institution of a phallo-centric society where she is deprived of freedom, will and reason. She becomes a mere tool in the hands of a man, manipulated to meet his needs. She becomes the prey beneath the masculine potency. She becomes the victim of his debauchery. She bears the chagrin of his destitute life. There is no voice, no mourning and no objection. She receives this verdict with her birth and abides by it until death, neither there is escape nor there is change. Das was able to exemplify this deplorable situation of women

in a male-dominated society in her autobiography *My Story* and in other novels. Here we could agree with P.K.J Kurup's assessment of *My Story* in his book *Contemporary Indian Poetry in English*

The predominant theme of "My Story" is the difficulty of being a woman in Indian society and finding love, instead of male lust and indifference in the institution of the arranged marriage. (108)

Quest for self:

I shall someday leave, leave the cocoon
You built around me with morning tea,
Love-words flung from doorways and of course
Your tired lust. I shall someday take
Wings, fly around, as often petals
Do when free in air.

- Kamala Das (*The Old Playhouse I*)

Liberty and quest for identity were yet another queries that predominated the consciousness of female characters of Kamala Das's novel. Beginning from the creation of man and creation of woman from him, she was under the command of man. Freedom was a far-flung dream as long as a woman of hindu society concerned. She was a 'doll' that hopped within the man's aspiration. Doll lacked freedom and a self identity. Doll is a mere commodity of entertainment and pleasure for the children, so does the same status of woman in the society. Woman is portrayed deficient of competence of man. She is made invalid and crippled in physical as well as in emotional stability. The concept of woman is constructed by the patriarchal society rather than it is a natural course. She is expected to be a 'headless doll', acquiescent and conventional. Her plush body is the medium of procreation and pleasure for her husband and her cranium is a clay matter as far as man is concerned. Simon de Beavoir in her book *The Second Sex* comments, "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman." The critics argue that it is not the biological fact of woman giving birth to a child that is the cause of her enslavement to the man but rather the cultural construction of feminine qualities as brittle, emotional, lack of physical prowess that makes her subordinate to man misplacing her actual identity with the identity of her husband. Das being born as a woman always carried a sense of lost identity. Even as a child she wrote poems on headless dolls.

I was six and very sentimental. I wrote sad poems about dolls who lost their heads and had to remain headless for eternity. Each poem of mine made me cry. (*My Story* 8) Every woman longed to dominate the man but their identity as a "woman" deterred them from doing so. They wished to lead man but social constraints were too grave that they feared the consequence of this unconventional act. In her autobiography, Das narrates how she wished to dominate her mate.

The one I liked best was kalyanasougandhikam, which narrated the exploits of Bhima, who went in search of the legendary flower that grew in a demon's garden, only because his wife Draupadi desired to adorn her hair with its petals. In daydreams I too became a Draupadi who commanded her adoring mate to brave the demons to get flowers for her wavy tresses..."(29)

Like Radha, Krishna was her lover too, a man of ideal disposition who was adored by every women. "I was wanted in those days, loved as men love their women, but I yearned for a change, a new life. I was looking for an ideal lover. I was looking for the one who went to Mathura and forgot to return to his Radha." (*My Story*165) .She dreamt of uniting with him for an eternal everlasting life of love and compassion which was denied in the real world. Her true lover was Krishna not her husband. She craved to get back to him. "Isn't it time yet take me back to You." (*My Story* 180) Das pleads to Lord Krishna. Here, in her fancies she began to identify herself as Radha waiting for Krishna's return. In real world she was an alien bereft of any concrete identity but in her fantasy world she was Krishna's beloved Radha. Thus Das found solace in these dreams and fancies where her longings were fulfilled without any restraints.

Later as she grew up she found happiness in shelling out her undone dreams or passions through her writings. Writing became a tool of self-expression and identity fulfillment. As Iqbal Kaur points out in her work *Feminist Revolution and Kamala Das's My Story* on Das's autobiography.

"...of any and every self-determined woman who inspite of all the odds she has to fight against in a man's world, must make attempts at self-actualization. It projects the struggle of the New Woman determined to establish her identity, her self worth."(144)

Das always fantasized a life of luxury and splendour where she can enjoy her individuality, freedom and dictate the public within her ambit. Therefore she always wished to pick up the role of an empress in the plays staged at her ancestral home and wished to become a lawyer inspired by their opulent life. She assumed that money and power would help her to assert her identity as a woman enjoying the same position equivalent to man because in Indian society the very one fact that led to the superiority of male over female is his role as an earning member of the family. One can see such an instance of her self-revelation in a passage from her autobiography *My Story* .

I used to tell my brother that I would take up law. I had heard that lawyers made enormous amounts of money and lived in style, keeping more than three cars and a pack of servants. I loved opulence and luxury. Perhaps this was the reason for my choosing the roles of queen and princesses whenever we decided to stage a play. I liked the bewitchment of gems, silks, and perfumes. In all my day dreams I saw myself as a bejewelled empress who controlled the destinies of her countrymen. Some kind of a Noor Jehan. (*My Story* 48)

Her sexual escapades were yet other approach for searching her identity. She rebelled against her uncompassionate husband and conventional society by indulging in extra-marital relationships.

I knew then if love was what I had looked for in marriage I would have to be given an identity that was lovable. When he returned to Bombay the first letter that he wrote was not to me but to a girl cousin who had allowed him to hug her while he walked towards my home in the evenings. I made up my mind to be unfaithful to him, at least physically. (*My Story* 90)

Frustrated by a love-less marriage, more than her rebellion against an unappealing society, her sexual adventures were a trail towards finding a true love, her beloved Krishna and thereby finding her identity with Radha. We find that longing in a passage, while she makes love with her lover.

‘You are my Krishna,’ I whispered kissing his eyes shut. He laughed. I felt that I was virgin in his arms. Was there a summer before the autumn of his love? Was there a dawn before the dusk of his skin? I did not remember. I carried him with me inside my eyelids, the dark god of girlhood dreams. At night from the lush foxholes of the city his concubines wailed for him, ‘Oh Krishna, oh Kanhaiya, do not leave for another.’ (*My Story* 174).

He was her dream-love but for him she was yet another prey to fill his sexual appetite. Like her husband he was too unsentimental and uncompromising never paid attention to her emotional need. They were not even capable of loving her for a moment. For them, love relationship was a mere fairy-tale, fancies of a silly woman. What woman craved was love, support and comfort rather than sexual delight. But later Das love was just an unreachable concept whereas lust is a need to escape from the qualms of a love-less marriage.

Years after all of it had ended. I asked myself why I took him on as my lover, fully aware of his incapacity to love and I groped in my mind for the right answers. Love has a beginning and an end, but lust has no such faults. I needed security. I needed permanence, I needed two strong arms thrown around my shoulders and a soft voice in my ear. (*My Story* 178)

Similar situation is seen in her short novel *A Doll for the Child Prostitute*, where Mira, a prostitute longs to marry her lover but later finds that his love was sham. Being let down by her lover’s indifference, she again indulges in prostitution to survive. Here Mira is denied social identity or identity as a human being but accepted as a mere pound of flesh to satisfy the sexual desire of man. In her novel *Manasi*, the heroine being perturbed by her marriage to an old man engross in illegitimate relationship for political gain. She affirms her individuality by grabbing an elevated position in political career. Therefore Das’ sexual adventures and her characters’ clandestine relationships were a strategy adopted by them to assert their identity and a desperate search for self that is being lost in a conservative society. Here one can rightly agree with views of the critic P.K.J Kurup on *My story*-

In her autobiography she makes it clear that beyond the body there is a realm of freedom which is so important that it is all encompassing. Viewed in this light one comes to the conclusion that even her sexual adventures are experiments of her search for her true self (*Contemporary Indian Poetry in English* 116)

Writing was yet another way to find comfort from all confined burdens and duties imposed by a male-dominated society. The inner conflicts and undisclosed desires of the author found their outlet in the words. Like Romantics Das also found refuge in writing to unleash her pent up emotions and frustrations. Das and her principal character in the novel *Manasi* thus adopt writing as an aid to cure their broken heart and torn soul, and to establish their identity. They escape from all wearies of their domestic life and creates a new world of their own, encompassed with their own dreams, feelings and aspirations untouched by social norms. Das herself has commented on her writing in her article 'I Believe' in *Savvy*.

A woman writer unfrustrates herself by writing of a life she desires. In the process of writing, she lives through situations, experiencing all and gains an emotional maturity that would not have come to her if she had not tested her ability to write she seeks to complete her life and to perfect herself through her writings. (90)

Her famous short stories such as *Kurachu Mannu*, *Koladu* and *Palayanam* also portray woman of different disposition fighting desperately to establish their identity. In her short story *Kurachu Mannu*, we come across a character who disposes her father-in-law provoked by his constant nagging, without any feeling of reluctance or guilty in order to lead a comfortable life. Here we could find a different woman who is all determined to do anything so that she could live a burden less life and gain an identity of a daring woman. In *Koladu*, we come across another woman burdened by domestic life who even at the time of death is concerned about the food that is being prepared at the kitchen rather than responding to the suffering of her family members and herself. In *Palayanam*, the principal character breaks away from nuptial ties to lead an individual respectful life. All the above characters of Das and herself in her autobiography emerge out to be a 'new woman' contrary to the concept of woman established by a conventional society. Here these characters are not ready to conform to a specific image of so called 'woman' but rather fight to establish an identity to reach an equal par with the man by unveiling indomitable courage and valor like that of a man. The concept of woman as a feeble dependant entity is a mere façade created by a male-dominated society in order to ascertain their authority and power over woman and to exercise the male chauvinism. But the characters of Das like *Manasi* and she herself are all set to challenge these old stricken customs and conventions by adopting a different stance to our patriarchal society thereby identifying their true self rather than conforming to an false identity as a 'woman' created by society. But what makes her different from a typical feminist is that her preference to establish an identity equal to that of man without compromising her femininity which is a natural trait of a woman. Thus her characters in spite of their daring nature, at times tend to be a responsible woman, dutiful wife and caring mother. Subash Chandra in "A Feminist Reading of My Story" comments on her character:

Kamala Das presents a fine and relevant example by delineating her own trials and tribulations, of the possibility of confronting and overcoming the constraints in the way of a woman seeking self-awareness and self-fulfillment. An important aspect of her type of feminism which emerges in her book is that it is possible to be one's true self without denying or suppressing one's femininity. Femaleness and quest for self-fulfillment are not antithetical. (148)

III. DEPICTION OF MOTHERHOOD AND FAMILY IN DAS'FICTION

*Afternoon. And, then, wailing into light
He came, so fair, a streak of light thrust
Into the faded light. They raised him
To me then, poured Jaisurya, my son,
Separated from darkness that was mine
And in me. The darkness I have known,
Lived with, the darkness of rooms where the old
Sit, sharpening words for future use,
The darkness of sterile womb and that of
The miser's pot, with the mildew on his coins.
Out of the mire of a moonless night was
He born, Jaisurya, my son, as out of
The wrong is born the right and out of night
The sun-drenched golden day...*

-Kamala Das (*My story* 158)

Family and children always played a vital role in rejuvenating the ever withering life of a dejected woman. The same situation pertains in Das's life too. Her most sustaining factor like every other woman was her son's "toothless smile" and innocent face that always helped her to wipe away her boundless tears and restored in her invincible courage and strength to face the miserable life. All her characters and the author herself gave ample importance to their role as a mother and a wife. Though they detested a restricted life with their husband, they always imparted value to their feminine role as a mother and a wife which nature bestowed on them. Like almost every traditional woman, they had an exceptional respect and affection towards their children's father however unkind or malicious he tends to be. And betraying or abandoning him always aroused a sense of guilt and frailty while encountering with their children. Such a situation is seen in the life of author's aunt Valiamma in her autobiography who married for the second time after her husband's demise.

Valiamma never used to talk to her son. She was shy and kept herself away from the men's quarters. Except on his birthday she did not even serve food to her son, and she seemed ill at ease in his company. Perhaps she felt that she had betrayed him by marrying for a second time, and one who was so different from his father. Her son's eyes pierced her heart and unsettled all the vague feelings of guilt and bitterness. But she need not have worried at all, for her son was a child of light, easy-going and unruffled. There were no dark sewers running beneath the streets of his mind. (31)

There was no question of betrayal or guilt in the case of Valiamma as she did not do anything against the conventions of the society. She married for the second time with the consent of the society after her husband's immature death. Thus her guiltiness lies not in breaking the norms of a patriarchal society or forgetting her deceased husband but in the sense of betraying her son by sharing the nuptial bed with another man other than his father. Here Das discerns the real conscious of a woman crammed with sense of loyalty and love towards her son as a mother, not as a woman with constructed ideologies of a male-centered society. It is her love for her former husband and her son that creates such an uncanny feeling in her. A loveless mother or wife would never have such intriguing feelings or culpability. Here again Das proves that it is love not conventions that governs a woman's psyche. Das herself yearned for a beautiful child while she was young, a son like Karna. Motherly instincts started budding in her at the very instant of her physical maturation. Following Kunthi's endeavour, she too prayed to Sun God for a beautiful son. Das narrates:

Kunthi had prayed to the Sun god to grant her a son and thus Karna, the beautiful one, was born, wearing on his earlocks kundals that shone like sun. After bath, alone in my room, I bared my body to the sun and told the Sun god that he ought to give me a son too. 'Take all of me,' I cried, 'take my swelling limbs, take my wavy tresses, take my round breasts with their diminutive nipples, take all of me and give me a son.' (*My Story* 59)

A lovely and a brave son was every woman's fancy. Das too dwelled upon that fancy and prayed desperately for such a son to save her from her dreadful isolation. Later as she became the mother of three son, her motherly feelings were still unrelenting. She spent sleepless nights looking after her sick son and disguised her voice as Krishna amusing her child with an imaginary life of hindu mythological gods. Das narrates:-

There was an imaginary life running parallel to our real life. I filled his childhood with magic and wonder. Always he smiled with sheer happiness of being alive. He sat on my knee looking like the infant Krishna... (*My Story* 102)

Das started shifting her Krishna image from her imaginary lover to her son who was real, because Krishna was her true love and she could truly love only one person and that was her son Monoo. Her son's Jaisurya's birth was "the right" born out of an erroneous relationship. Children always filled the void of her despondent life. Therefore, family and children helped the author and her characters to sustain an unbroken relationship with their companion though it was unhappy and discontented. Das has also not failed in delineating her motherhood which she believes to be a nature bestowed blessing on woman rather than a burden or society imposed obligations. She never denied the significance of motherhood or wifehood, what she wished is sanctity and understanding in marriage life. Unlike feminist she never questioned the constructed image of a woman, by the society; what she aspired is the respect and merit for woman who is also a part of humanity like that of a man. As Niranjana Mohanty, in the article 'Sublimation of the Feminine Ego: Poetry of Kamala Das' in Malayalam Literary Survey points out-

...she does not foreground her femininity ...as a gesture of defiance as the feminists stridently insist on doing. Her aim is to attain a wholeness in her personality, to achieve what Woolf, and before her, Coleridge called an androgynous mind. There exists a complete integrated harmony between the male and female elements to her mind. (142)

IV.

CO

CONCLUSION

Kamala Das' works emerge out to be unconventional and unacceptable to a traditional society, but what she is trying to divulge through this non-conformist method is the existent life of a woman suffocating within the constraints of the whims of a patriarchal society. Das asserts the need of every woman to be accepted as a human being all throughout her works. Every woman has a self, an identity and a desire to reach the zenith of this wide world but she is denied all these privileges. However, author conveys, besides the longing to reach in par with man in the society, woman always carries the seed of being a faithful wife and a loving mother which can be bloomed when it is sprinkled with drops of love and care.

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