

Relation between Poetry and Psychology with special reference to the Poetry of Kamala Das:

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Abstract: *The 'Psychology' and 'Poetry' are two different fields. It is not easy to compare the two. Although they cannot be compared, but there is a close connection which undoubtedly exist between them. This connection arises from the fact that the practice of the art is a psychological activity and as such can be approached from a psychological angle. Considered in this light, art like any other human activity deriving from psychic motives is a proper subject for psychology. Art by its very nature is not science, and science by its very nature is not art, both these spheres of the mind have something in reserve that is peculiar to them and can be explained only in its own terms. Hence when we speak of the relation of psychology to art, we shall treat only of that aspect of art which can be submitted to psychological scrutiny without violating its nature.*

Psychology is the science of human mind, behavior, soul, consciousness, unconsciousness etc. As it is the study of behavior, it includes anything a person do which can be observed in some way. It also includes feelings, attitudes, thoughts and other mental processes. In the same way poetry represents thoughts, imagination, and awareness, experiences expressed through meaning, sound, and rhythmic language in such a way as to evoke an emotional response.

According to modern psychologists that the unconscious processes are more important than the conscious ones. It is these unconscious impulses that lead the poet or any artist to produce a poetical work or any other work of art. What poetry may refer to as the abyss, our wilderness or wild, psychology more likely refers as the unconscious. Poetry offers psychology its own perspective on the reaches of the realm, a unique repository not only of energy, but also of imagery, metaphor, paradox, inversion, contradiction, and often enough beauty. Poetry valorizes and embraces the resources of the unconscious.

Kamala Das born on 31st March 1934 in Malabar, Kerala. Indian poet, short story writer, novelist, playwright, essayist, non-fiction writer, children's writer, and autobiographer. She is one of the best-known contemporary Indian women writers. Das has been called a poet in the confessional mode. The confessional poets deal in their poetry with personal, emotional experiences which are generally taboo. There is a ruthless self-analysis and a tone of utter sincerity. What a confessional poet gives us are the psychological equivalents for his or her mental state and it is such psychological equivalents, that we always get in the poetry of Kamala Das. She reflects almost all aspects of psychology in her poetry. So, thus by comparing the poetry of Kamala Das with the field of psychology, at the end can say that there is a close relation between poetry and psychology with special reference to the poetry of Kamala Das.

Keywords: *Poetry, Psychology, Kamala Das, Kamala Das' Poetry, My Story.*

I. Introduction:

As we know that poetry and psychology are different fields but there is a close relation between them. Both have their origin from emotions. Poetry may be defined as a verbal composition designed to convey experiences, ideas, or emotions in a vivid and imaginative way, characterized by the use of language chosen for its sound and suggestive power and by the use of literary techniques such as meter, metaphor and rhyme. Poetry is evocative. It typically evokes in the reader an intense emotion, joy, sorrow, anger, catharsis, love.....etc. **“Psychology on the other hand involves the study of mind, behavior, thought etc. It is the study of human and animal behavior with the object of understanding why living beings behave as they do. According to psychologists, the psychology had its origin on the assumption of the existence of psychic (mental) patterns”.**¹

These patterns include conscious contents- thoughts, memories, etc which came from life experience. Humans experience the unconscious through symbols encountered in all aspects of life; in dreams, art, religion etc. Poets depict all these emotions in the form of piece of art, literature- poetry, prose, novel etc. Poetry influences all experiences, behaviors, most especially the emotional ones of the poet.

“It has been already hinted that metaphysics and psychology have long been my hobby-horse”.²

The poetry since from its origin has psychological interest in it.

“The school of medical psychology inaugurated by Sigmund Freud has undoubtedly encouraged the literary historian to bring certain peculiarities of a work of art into relation with the intimate personal

life of the poet. As per the psychologists (Freud, Jung, Lodge), the poetry is the creative work which has its origin from the imagination. Imagination stands for the repressed or hidden thoughts of the mind. As per Carl Jung, "the mind of a creative writer is molded by his/her collective unconsciousness and not by libido or sexual energy. The poet who responds to the prompting of the unconsciousness is able to tap deep emotional sources".³

If we see the Shakespeare's texts, dream theory, the structural mode, incest fantasies, primal scene fantasies, are the symbolizing and
"It has been recently shown that even Keats, surely one of the least 'Scientific', of the English Romantics was profoundly influenced by the psychological thought of the day".⁴

For Wordsworth poetry is;

'Spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility'.

For P.B.Shelly;

'Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds'.

For Mathew Arnold;

'Poetry is, at bottom, a criticism of life'.

The above mentioned some definitions clearly show a clear relation between poetry and psychology.

All had parents, all have a father-or-a-mother complex, and all know about sex and therefore have certain common and typical human difficulties. One poet may be influenced more by his relation to his father, another by the tie to his mother, while a third shows unmistakable traces of sexual repression in his poetry. Since all this can be said equally well not only of every neurotic but of every normal human being, nothing specific is gained for the judgment of a work of art.

The poetry and psychology have a close relation between them. In the poetry of Kamala Das, psychology or psychoanalytical perspectives are present in every work of her. She did not get any formal degree. She is the confessional poet. She gives us her introduction in the poem 'An Introduction', as;

**I am Indian, very brown, born in
Malabar, I speak three languages,
Write in two, dream in one.⁵**

Kamala Das took the literary world by storm in the mid-sixties, has created a permanent place for herself in the contemporary Indian literature towards freedom. The poet being a woman herself made it her mission to the hypocrisy of the husband-wife relationship in the Hindu society. There is in her poetry an awareness of human rights and her judicious views about how the world could be properly reset, readjusted and reformed. She wrote for women's cause in most clear cut language. She has surely outgrown Victorian models and accepted sex and sensuality as an integral part of her poetry. Many of her poems are suffused with warmth and passion, with heat of an unrequited love and unfulfilled desire. She is compared with Sappho in Greek literature, Elizabeth Barrette Browning in English letters, and like Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath in modern American poetry. Kamala Das offers us a feast of vivid images of love couched in felicitous language.

In her autobiography, 'My Story', she has mentioned that:

"poets cannot close their shops like shop-men and return home. Their shop is their mind and as long as they carry it with them they feel the pressures and the torments. A poet's raw material is not stone or clay, it is his/her personality".⁶

Kamala Das' poetry has the tendency that shows depression, self-consciousness, and flamboyance as despair alternated with self-assertion. Her ability to depict, not as a male but as a female, the situations, characters and dilemmas, straight out of everyday dogmatic life, particularly her own-needs to be recognized.

**"I studied all men, what women expect
Out of marriage and what they get, why
Not more than one husband? And I have
Lived beautifully".⁷**

The above lines deal with the subject of love and emotional discontentment in an empty married life.

Kamala Das once said:

"I always wanted love, and if you don't get it within your home, you stray a little".⁸

Though some might label Kamala Das as "a feminist" for her candor in dealing with women's needs and desires, Kamala Das "has never tried to identify herself with any particular version of feminist activism". Kamala Das's views can be characterized as "a gut response," a reaction that, like her poetry, is unfettered by other's notions of right and wrong. Nonetheless, poet Eunice de Souza claims that Das has

"mapped out the terrain for post-colonial women in social and linguistic terms".⁹

Das has ventured into areas unclaimed by society and provided a point of reference for her colleagues. She has transcended the role of a poet and simply embraced the role of a very honest woman.

She does not project a single personal experience in her writing that is not a collective experience. As she uses her personal voice to speak on behalf of all the women of the world. There is a definite touch of universality in Kamala Das's poetry. She stands for every woman and what she feels and thinks is universal:

**“We are all alike,
In our wrappings of hairless skin”.**¹⁰

And

**“Just as I am every
Woman who seeks love”.**¹¹

The poem “An Introduction” shows that Kamala Das is the leading voice of the victimized women in the world. She fearlessly highlights their joys and sorrows which are in no way different from her. She uses “I” not only in a personal but also in a generic or impersonal sense in this poem. The poetess reaches out to other female counter-parts through her. She clarifies her stance in the following lines:

**“I have no joys which are not yours, no
Aches which are not yours. I too call myself I”.**¹²

And finally she discovers that her experiences are in no way different from the experiences of every frustrated and neglected woman:

**“I met a man, loved him. Call
Him not by any name, he is every man
Who wants a woman, just as I am every
Woman who seeks love”.**¹³

The poetry of Kamala Das is a sort of psychic striptease. She maintains the shortest interval between emotion and expression. Kamala Das composes the raga of self in her poetry, a symphony of the discordant notes of life. She craves for Love which she never get in her life right from her childhood till her death.

**“I see you go away from me
And feel the loss of love I never once received”.**¹⁴

Kamala Das clearly states that finding no emotional identity or satisfaction with her husband, she is driven into others' arms:

**“I enter others
Lives, and
Make of every trap of lust
A temporary home”.**¹⁵

Consequently, her pure love degenerates into unwarranted 'lust', and her emotional urges remain unfulfilled. Again and again, she focuses our attention on herself; again and again, she uses to 'I' and 'My' and 'Mine'. It shows her Personal Unconsciousness.

**“I who have lost
My way and beg now at strangers' doors to
Receive love, at least in small change”?**¹⁶

It is the husband's monstrous ego that often hurts the pride of Kamala Das. Her poetic world is full of complaints and anguish against such a nature of her insensitive and selfish husband.

Kamala Das is remembered chiefly for creating awareness among women about the need to think of them first and foremost. One cannot help others without helping oneself. She immortalizes the splendor of nature and human relationships in her poetry, where personal experiences turn into universal on account of passionate expression.

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