

Kamala Das as a Confessional Poet

Kamala Das is preeminently a confessional poet and, in this respect, she may be regarded as an outstanding Indo-Anglian poet comparable to the American Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath. A confessional poet is one who takes the reader into confidence about his or her personal and private life, and reveals those facts of her life which an ordinary person, even if that person be a poet, would keep strictly to himself or herself because of the delicate nature of those facts. A confessional poet has to shed all of his or her inhibitions and restrictions and restraints which the social code and the conventions of society impose upon him or her.

Kamala Das has a lot to confess in her poetry, and she does so in the most candid manner conceivable. Indeed, her poetry has no precedent so far as her frankness and candour in revealing herself to the readers are concerned. She has expressed her intense desire to confess in a very graphic manner by saying that she must 'striptease' her mind and that she must exude autobiography. Her confessions pertain to her role as a wife, as a mistress to relationship with her husband, and of her extra-marital sexual relationships. The themes of most of her poems are love or lust, and marriage. In dealing with these themes, she hides nothing, and in dealing with this subject-matter, she makes use of language freely, without any scruples, and even unabashedly. The orthodox reader would even accuse her of being immodest, shameless, or brazen in her use of the language through which she lays bare the secrets of her private life. Her poetry is the poetry of introspection, of self-analysis, of self-explanation, and of self-revelation.

Kamala Das as a confessional poet has rendered some valuable service to the female sex by making them conscious of their dormant sexual desires and their suppressed discontent with their husbands from the sexual point of view. She has thus given a sort of incentive to women to assert themselves or at least not to suppress themselves. In these confessional poems Kamala Das appears as a feminist, indirectly advocating the liberation of women from the conventional social restraints and taboos.

Two of Kamala Das's poems contain her feelings as a mother. The poem entitled *Jaisurya* expresses her feeling of exultation when she is going to give birth to a child and her feeling of pride when the child comes out of the darkness of her womb into this bright world lit by sunlight. During the child-birth, Kamala Das felt that to her at that time neither love was important nor lust, and that the manor men, who had been betraying her by gratifying their lust and then forsaking her, did not matter to her at all. She found child-birth to be a glorious phenomenon. The other poem about her motherhood has the title of *The White Flowers*.

Confessional poetry is written by a poet under an internal pressure in order to give vent to his or her grievances or feeling of resentment or a sense of the injustice experienced by him or her. Kamala Das's poetry is replete with a powerful force of catharsis and protest. This is so because of Kamala Das's intensely confessional quality and her ultra-subjective treatment. Kamala Das raises her confessional tarts to the level of a specific universal appeal. The struggle of her self ultimately becomes the struggle of all mankind, and herein lies her forte because the best confessional poetry is that which rises above the subject-matter to achieve some sort of victory over pain and defeat.

Every poem of hers, whether it be *The Looking-Glass* or *Substitute*, has come directly from experience. She has not written propagandist poetry; she has not written any poem deliberately as a sponsor or advocate of any social cause. She went on writing poems because of an inner urge to reveal her personal life and its secrets; and it is just an accident that her poetry has turned out to be poetry in which the rights of women have emerged as an important theme.