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The Imagery of Sickness and Death in the Poetry Of Kamala Das: A Study

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Abstract:

Kamala Das' poetry is a record of her own experiences and observations, her own unfulfilled love and her own sexual exploitation, disillusionment and frustration that she had to suffer in a male dominated society. Kamala Das has written many poems which narrates her preoccupation with death and illness. Mrs. Das's story has also been a story of recurrent attacks of diseases and illness. When any poet grows old with the passage of time of suffers pangs, distress and illness in his life he explains their experiences in his work. Kamala Day is a singer of feminine sensibility suffered a lot with physically and mentally in her life. She presents pathetic picture of death and illness. The theme of death and illness is described in her poem like, "suicide", "my morning Tree", "The sunshine cat", "The Invitation" and "Gino". Kamala Das has been a suffered throughout her life her poetry is replete with the images of disease destruction, death, loneliness, helplessness, frustration and rejection, we invites death to bring to an end the non-stop sufferings and frustrations in life. The aim of present paper is to bring forth this aspect of Kamala Das' poetry and examine various poems related to death and illness. The romantic poets like Keats and shelly narrated their sufferings their poetry.

Keywords: *Illness, Death, Suffer, Frustration, Pathetic*

Introduction:

Kamala Das is the leading champion of feminism in the field of Indian poetry in English. She is the singer of feminine sensibility. Kamala Das's poetry deals mainly with the theme of love, lust, and disillusionment in love along with many other themes in her poetry. Many of the poems of Kamala Das show the quality of autobiographical note in which the readers find her emotional attitude towards the crucial conditions during sickness that every human being suffers from. Kamala Das describes unavoidable suffering and helplessness in human life. Death is not the source of fear in

Kamala Das's poetry. She is aware of the reality of death and accepts it boldly In the poem "The suicide ", she hails death to get rid of the life of humiliations and endless failures and frustration in love. The poetess considers that a loveless life can be equated with death. She openly accepts that she cannot survive without love in life:

"If love is not to be had I want to be dead."⁽¹⁾

Kamala Das's last volume, the Old Playhouse and Other Poems, is chiefly related to disease, sickness, and death. All her romantic dreams of the marital life Shattered and she faced a Emptiness in her life. There was no space for singing and dancing in her meaningless life. Her life is like an old playhouse filled with darkness. Her husband offered love in fatal dozes which would ultimately kill his wife.

" No more singing, no more a dance, my mind is an old playhouse with all its lite put out. The strong man's technique is Always the same, he serves his love in lethal doses."⁽²⁾

Her life is full of frustration disappointments, sorrowsand miseries. The sense of miseries and frustration is also described in her poem "my morning tree" where she present her life through the allegory of a free in front of her home which has no flowers, no fruits, no buds and there is no hope. The poetess use" No hope" thrice in the poem. In this poem, the effect of despair is the symbol of death. She describes death like a red flower on this morning free:

"I shall see a sudden flower, and know at once
That my death is just a flower, a reel red
Morning flower and then from behind....."⁽³⁾

Here the metaphor of flower show that in this lonely, troublesome and sterile world death is soothing and pleasant like a flower because death invites an end to all the miseries and worries of this world.

The poem "The Sunshine Cat" deals with the pathos of a forlorn woman who failed to get real love in her life. She was sexually ill-treated and exploited by those whom she loved and were knownto her. They indulged in lust but denied her the emotional and spiritual thrills of love. Theman persona's search for real love ends in frustration because she has been treated like an object of lust by her husband as well as other men whom she approached for love, she is shockedto learn from her lovers' admission that they can give by lust-not love. They are not concerned aboutfilling her emotional or spiritual demands. She is finally securely shut in the room by her husband likesunshine cat and is alienated from the main stream of life.

"Her husband shut her
In every morning;locked her in a room of books
With a streak of sunshine lying near the

Door.....”⁽⁴⁾

The poetess's mind is divided between life and death and this produces tragic tensions in it. The sea which represents the porter's death-wish finally succeeds in convincing the poetess to accept the invitation of death by drowning to overcome her disappointments and frustration in love. The Sea today seems to her in a talkative mood and invites her to come down and drown herself into its waters. It is an invitation to the woman to commit suicide and end her tension-ridden life. She was feeling tortured by her memory of her experience of love-making with a lover of hers. The lover had gone away after making love to her, and had not returned. The woman knew that her lover would not come back, but she could not forget her experience of love-making with that man because the experience had been a most delicious one. The sea seemed to repeat its invitation to the woman to enter its waters in order to put an end to her life. But the woman replied that she wanted to be left alone and not to be pestered by the sea. The sea spoke to the woman again, urging her to end by life in its waters. The sea told her that, if she waited for her death to come naturally to her, she would have to be cremated; and her dead body would then be placed on a funeral pyre to be consumed by the fire. The sea said that if she jumped into its waters, she would meet a cool death and that she would be able to stretch her limbs on the Cool sand at its bottom and would be able to rest her head on the flowers growing there. The woman refuses to end her life by committing suicides she rejects the invitation of the sea to drown herself into its waters. She cannot bear any separation from him; even in this period of crisis in her life she is still optimistic about her final unity with her lover. She describes the invitation of the sea;

“End in me, cries the sea think of yourself

Lying onto funeral Pyre

With a burning head-on. Just think Bathe cool

Stretch your limbs on cool

Secret sand pillow your head on anemones.....”⁽⁵⁾

In “Gino” Kamala Das exposes the nature of her partners' impersonal lust and its tragic consequences on her body. It indicates kamala Das is obsession with decay and death. This poem begins on a note of warning and fear, comparing the kiss of a lover to the bite of a krait who fills the bloodstream with its “accursed essence”.

She finds the essence of love, and the sense of deal which is also the sense of life. The poem “Gino” also conveys her sense of disgust and scorn for the mall posture and habits. The poetess carries her body without joy and the lust-ridden body will wither and will enter another womb as one who is filled with discontent:

“The body I wear without joy

Shall wither with
My darling's impersonal lust
It (body) shall grow gross
And reach large proportions before its end.....”(6)

The poem "Death Brings no Loss", show herfearlessness of death she study death with a nightfall. It is just a temporary pause between morning and evening. The death of body will not bring any loss for her. The term of birth and death are like day and night,

“Each night when darkness turns
Me blind, I think of death,
Understanding it to
be like night - fall”(7)

These lines remind as Shelley's famous work"ode to the west wind”, in which Shelley writes:

"The trumpet of a prophecy!o wind,
if winter comes, can spring be far behind?

This poem suggests that sadness darkness night, winter and death are followed by happiness, light, day spring and life. Kamala Das narrated death as a temporary phase and she is hopeful to get something. There lines remind us the philosophy of Gita.

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