



Self-Purgation Analysis in the works of Kamala Das

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Abstract: *This research paper is an academic exercise and interpretation of selected works of Kamala Das and D. H Lawrence. It examines the interesting and intriguing personality behind their writings. The work of Lawrence and Kamala Das brings out their search for a compatible relationship. They both suffer personal agony all through their life. We need to go deeply to the core to understand their personality and intention in their writings.*

I intend to examine the Lawrence ideology in his works like Sons and lovers, The Rainbow, Women in love which shows how he employed an art especially through novels to reveal his message which is an eradication of conflict between intellect and, the natural instinct, which will lead to the fulfillment of the desire by creating a balance between the relationships. The research will also convey the views concerning morality and life which are central to human existence.

Out of all Indian English Poets, Kamala Das (1934-2009) has achieved an important position in the pioneering of confessional mode of writing like her other counterparts like Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath. She suffered in her incompatible marital life which tortured her mentally and physically. Her husband, instead of providing her romantic environment maintained a distanced relationship towards her. This attitude completely frustrated her.

Key Words: Self-analysis, feminism, self-identity, personal agony, physically, providing, environment.

In this research paper, I have made an effort to analyze the poems of Kamala Das and selected novels of D.H Lawrence in order to focus on their confessional engagements with 'self' and its negotiation with experiences. Both Kamala Das and D. H Lawrence searched for their identity, their works clearly depicts the story of their personal life, their agony and also their self-obsession. They were very open in confessing about their personal life.

The Confessional work mainly portrays the self of the writer and its response to the influence on a world during the dissolution, as the confessional writer creates the entire world with his own distressed perception. For them the reality comes from their own stressed relationship and its disturbed relationship from its own self. The primary objective of the confessional writing is stability in life and accepts the miseries of life with acute realization. This writing

became popular during modern times which uncovered the writers psychological pressure dominating his sensibility. In confessional writings the writer presumes his woes and displeasures, sense of violence which expresses the society with its distortion. Taking in concern the confessional tradition, Das in her poems talks about her disturbed, disagreeable and forceful sexual encounters with her husband. Her poems are mostly talks about herself which lends an authenticity in her poetry which lacks in most of love poetry written today. Feminism is a movement and revolution against discrimination of women on the basis of gender, legal, economic and political levels. The word 'Feminism' is derived from the Latin word 'femina' meaning 'woman'. Alice Rossi was the first to use it. This movement was to explore new images of women due to their oppression. This oppression can diminish only if



men become more aware on this structure called as 'patriarchy'. Kamala Das is seen as a powerful voice in the Indian context embodying a revolutionary quest for a meaningful relationship with men. Her frank and honest portrayal of the female psyche is viewed as a positive departure from the traditionally passive feminine sensibility. She is largely subjective and autobiographical, anguished and tortured. She lets us peep into her sufferings and tortured psyche. On the other hand, according to Sigmund Freud, Lawrence as a real psychoanalyst talks about his own unconscious in the characters. Moreover, descriptions of situations are highly significant in his novels. Freudian's interpretation regarding the literature applied in the novels of Lawrence becomes ingenious which are also convincing in explaining the return of suppressed, also besides portraying the psychology of characters, his novels reveal the conscious and unconscious state of the writer and his life. A psychoanalytical exploration of the selected novels of D.H. Lawrence also discussed in earlier chapter is the theory of the dynamics of personality development and a theory of personality organization that guides psychoanalysis which is a clinical method for treating psychopathology. Sigmund Freud originated it for the first time in the late 19th century.

No doubt, many modifications have been done in his psychoanalytical theory since its inception. In the last third of the 20th century, several decades after Freud's death, the theory for psychological treatment came to full prominence as part of the flow of critical discourse; but it can be accepted that the theory as well as its validity is now rejected or widely disputed. In accordance with the belief of Freud, Lawrence as an author pours his own unconscious into the characters and situation depicted in most of his works specifically in his novels. In this respect, Lawrence has made the base of his psychology.

Besides the exposing various dynamics of personality, Lawrence has worked a lot on the unconscious mind. As Freud said the

unconsciousness of human being forces to expose the inner thoughts and feeling of a person. There are different techniques which help to understand and access the unconsciousness from various methods like dream analysis, and free association. Also, Sigmund Freud believed that a dream gives a chance to explore his unconscious; it is a royal road to the unconscious.

One of the only Indian women writer Kamala das explored the psychoanalytical theory of an individual and she projects in her poetry and novels her own self without inhibition and hesitation. She revolts against the male dominated Indian society and reveals her feeling in a confessional disposition. *My Story* is an autobiographical novel in which she explores how the life of Indian women is restricted and suppressed in Indian society. Kamala Das an Indo-Anglican writer, a native of Kerala, was well-versed in English too. Her poems reflect feminist aspects, her independent spirit, longing for love and affection, frankness in expressing emotion are some instances. She exhibits through her works, her views on marriage, motherhood, sex and the role of women without any inhibition. She explores 'the self' in her poems which is the crux of her poetry, a search for identity, process of self-probing which oscillates between her nostalgic past and nightmarish present. She is a symbol of security, love and freedom and the present stands for insecurity, pretensions and bondage of society. For Kamala Das, writing becomes a 'compulsion neurosis'. Her private angst creates this storm which finds an outlet in the outburst of soulful poetry, 'my grief fell like drops of honey on the white sheets of my desk?' (*The Old Playhouse* and other poems 7).

Kamala Das uses poetry as literal self-exposure, the baring of the soul and stripping off the mask so that the innermost thoughts and deepest emotions are laid bare, private and sexual humiliations come out in the open, and in her sufferings, in her torment and in her anguish she becomes one with the reader. One of the most important theories of twentieth century, the psychoanalytic theory of



Sigmund Freud, Oedipus Complex which he explained in his 'Interpretation of Dreams' (1899) is explored freely by Lawrence. Freud transformed the way the world looks at sexuality. According to him, during the early development stage, as children grow up, they derive sexual desires which they first focus in the parent of the opposite sex. He developed this theory for the explanation of the formation of ego and super-ego. The castration anxiety makes them relate with the father and desire for the mother.

In the novel, 'Sons and Lovers' Paul's connection with Mrs. Morel is passionately disturbing. He fails to make satisfactory relationship with either woman, Miriam or Clara. In case of William, there's a reverse Oedipus complex. He is more devoted to career and drifts from family. Thus, Paul replaces him to become a responsible son. On the other hand, Lawrence in Sons and Lovers represents Paul whom he describes as himself as the 'man of the house' during Mr. Morel's accident which depicts male supremacy. We see the instinctual drive also in case of Clara Dawes who is projected in the novel as a disgrace, a sex-object of Paul as opposed to Miriam's purity. Clara is the only woman in the novel, whose sexuality is questioned by many critics. Her libidinal desire is shown in the way she longs for intense sexual experience with Paul which would free her from her husband. Similarly in Kamala Das's poem 'An Introduction' there is a special reference to self-identity and wounded self. The poetess presents herself as wounded due to social and familial humiliation in her past and present life. The poem is to be considered as a revolt against the social norms of the male dominated society, which speaks about the freedom of women and creation of their own identity in such a society. Kamala Das presents the self-divided into two kinds: the poetic self (as an artist) and the self as a woman. Das tries to establish both the selves strongly enough to assert her own identity. She differentiates between both the selves and attempts to present the agonies of the selves. Her poetic self and self as a woman are wounded not only by the society but also her family members,

relatives and friends. An Introduction involves the search for self-identity and self-assertion.

Lawrence looked for the retreat in his personal life; similarly Kamala Das looked for fulfillment and security in her marriage but was faced with total despair after undergoing through rejection, jealousy and bitterness. When the marital walls became prison walls became choking and smothering for Kamala Das, then she started looking for herself and her suspended identity. As she says; 'Who are you? I ask each and every one, the answer is within, it is I (Das 26). Elsewhere she wishes to negate all relationships in the quest of 'Self'. Her desire is to break free from the pessimism that threatens to lay siege around her thereby annihilating her identity.

As quoted by A.N Dwiwedi: 'I shall someday leave, leave the cocoon You built around me, I shall someday take Wings, fly around, as often petals Do, when free is air. (Dwiwedi)

She tries to rationalize her quest and speculates and reaches the conclusion that her true being did not exist in a tradition or philosophy but in herself as a writer. Through the dreams of warm climes of Malabar, her home state, memories of her grandmother. Her poetry presents the Indian woman in a way that has outraged the usual male sense of decency and decorum. As she inaugurates a new age for women poets, she constitutes a total rejection of the conventional styles of poetic expression of the dominant culture or the male-oriented universe. Her poetry is the acknowledgement and celebration of the beauty and courage of being a woman, not celebrating unbridled sensuality, but projecting the stereotype of a wronged woman and at once asserting the need to establish her voice and identity. The poetic self of Kamala Das is seen to be wounded in the poem as she is restricted to choose a language of her own to express her feelings. When she prefers English to express her feelings, everyone including her friends, cousins and relatives object to her not to use English for writing as it is not her mother tongue. But she sticks firm to her decision and



declares everybody to leave her alone. Don't write in English, they said, English is not your mother-tongue. Why not leave Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins, Every one of you? (An Introduction)

As a confessional writer, "there is a characteristic tendency in her two plays ?the literal self- more and more at the center of the poem (Rosenthal 27).

Therefore, it becomes evident that Kamala tried to reach the goal of discovering her Self via many avenues of introspection, reflection and connectivity to others in her hazardous journey of confession. Through her, we see the evolution of a woman from being a teenage bride to an adulteress, to a mother figure. Although we go for a first reading of the novel may suggest that Lawrence's feelings for his mother, though intense, are not really unconventional. He has pity for her troubles, admires her courage, and feels it is his duty to protect her. She is the angel in the house, the innocent victim of her husband's uncomprehending coarseness, who needs her son's love and tenderness, and whom young Paul cannot suffer to disappoint by falling below her high expectations. But beneath these commendable feelings, there lie darker ones: Mrs. Morel's depiction anticipates that of the monstrous mother described almost a decade later in *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, who ?makes man discover that cradles should not be rocked, in order that her hands may be left free - she is now a queen of the earth, and inwardly a fearsome tyrant. Ultimately she tears him to bits? (*Fantasia of Unconscious* 99).

During this time, D.H. Lawrence initiated the concept of identity and understood its unique and dynamic relation. In his novels At this point, I would venture to characterize Lawrence's concept of identity, as I understand it, as most importantly organic and vital which is dynamic, unique and relational His dynamism explained with his characters in the novel which can be illustrated in fictional terms *The Rainbow*. It depicted the natural world with a force of inspiration through the main characters.

There were the stars in the dark heaven travelling, the whole host passing by on some eternal voyage. So he sat small and submissive to the greater ordering?. (D. H. Lawrence 39-40)

His relationship with Clara proved to be more fruitful than that of Mirium, but it had been comparatively shallow and superficial. Paul was successful to keep himself free from being over- much engaged with Clara. Paul, as he was now more considerate than ever before, thought his sex- experience impersonal, a positive outcome of the male- female union through him and her: ? seemed almost as if he had known the baptism of fire in passion. But it was not Clara. It was something that happened because of her, but it was not her? (D.H Lawrence 343). This sexual communion with Clara brought Paul out of his physical timidity. What he had failed to perform against his father, a duel between two males, now he did it with another proletariat, Baxter Dawes, Clara's husband. As soon as he threw a glass of beer on Baxter's face, he was forced to identify himself as a man detached from his mother, He came home and thought:

"There was now a good deal of his life of which he necessarily could not speak to his mother. He had a life apart from her his sexual life. His life wanted to be free itself of her there was a distance between them"(D.H Lawrence 334).

His battle with Baxter Dawes in the dark of night (symbolic to the darkness of the pit) completed his final stage of physical revival. The very injury he sustained in the battle with Baxter healed him of his malady. With it he came in deep contact with the living reality of his self. The relationship established between them through hate later proved to be more positive than any of Paul's relationships with his female counterparts. Indeed he now struggled out of the devouring women, mainly of his mother. In contradiction to his mother's soothing words, that he had not met the right woman to marry, he instantly replied: "and I never shall meet the right woman while you live" (D.H Lawrence 340). He urged Clara Dawes, who appeared to him, too insignificant to solve his



problem, to be re-united with her husband. But Clara Dawes' own experience of Paul was rather unpleasant. There was no stability in him. Paul appeared to her "paltry and insignificant". She found him "small and mean" (D.H Lawrence 393) - reiteration of the same words with which Paul earlier had described his father: "collier's small, mean head" (D.H Lawrence 66). Thus, with Paul's gradual acceptance of proletarian community of his father, his urge for the autonomy of self was also fulfilled. As a consequence, he 'killed' his mother with an ambiguous act of love, hate and self-liberation. He broke his love relationship with Miriam and rejected Clara, and now "wanted to go on alone" (D.H Lawrence 394).

Through this chapter I shall bring out self-obsession and search for self-identity of Kamala das and D. H Lawrence. D.H Lawrence selected works consists of various instances which depicts and urge for self-victory, in his works different scenes are portrayed by various characters that are in search of their physical mental satisfaction. On the contrary, Kamala Das always wanted win as a woman, she wanted to come out from patriarchal norms, she always struggled for herself as a woman which is definitely for her self-obsession and to make her own identity as a woman who are subjugated in the society. To a certain extent I feel Lawrence always poured his personal agony through his works and characters same as in the works of Kamala Das. Though through the discussion carried in the current chapter we can also conclude that Lawrence always wanted to dominate as man, he also accepted man as superior to woman to a some extent. But Kamala Das's never believed in the gender biasness, she always fought for the equality. Therefore, both Lawrence and Kamala das suffered somehow in their personal life and portrayed their self-love and freedom through their works.

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