



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol.2.S.1.,2015

ISSN
INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

ALL DYING AND LIVING: DEPICTION OF DEATH IN THE POETRY OF
KAMALA DAS AND GAURI DESHPANDE

JALPA RANA

Research Scholar, Sainath University, Ranchi



ABSTRACT

The post-independence Indo-English poetry is something different in terms of theme and style both. The women poets of the present century has come out of the romantic entanglements, of the claptrap of the past tradition and succeeded in formulating a new tradition and a 'new mode of articulation' that is at once original natural and spontaneous. Death is a prevalent theme in the poetry of many poets. Among women poets, Kamala Das and Gauri Deshpande have depicted death in their many poems. They both examined death from varied angles. There are many similarities in the representation of death in their poetry. Death is not a horrifying in their poems. In some of their poems they regarded death as a reliever from pain and sorrows of the world. For Kamla Das death doesn't make her sad instead it would relieve the poetess of the sufferings. . At various occasions, death seems an easy escape for her from the loneliness of life. In her poems Gauri Deshpande described death as comforter, lover, friend and brother; she expresses a very distinct attitude towards death in her poems.

Key Words: Death, Escape, Suffering, Pain

Article Info:

Article Received:03/04/2015

Revised on: 07/04/2015

Accepted on: 09/04/2015

©COPY RIGHT 'KY PUBLICATIONS'

Indian women poets writing in English from Toru Dutt to Kamala Das reveal the mind boggling variety of themes as well as style that poetry is capable of offering. It needs to be remembered that poetry written by women need not be viewed only as feminist poetry. For the first time in Indian English poetry, the women poets of post- Independence and postmodern period depicted about their desires, lust, sexuality and gestational experiences. They enriched Indian English poetry with a wealth of new themes and experience. These poets have discovered their own voices and developed their sensibilities. Their poetry expresses the desire of woman to get away from the ties that have restricted her since times immemorial.

Kamala Das is basically a poet of the modern Indian woman's dilemma giving expression openly than any other Indian Woman poet. She is not any woman but a voice of all women who have been suffering from ages. Das's poetry is most convincing to those readers who approach it to identify themselves with the inner sight of the poet and see the world through the eyes of a haunted woman. Most of her poetry concerns itself

with the poet's intensely felt need for declaring her autobiography to the world. Her poetry is all about herself, about her desire for love, her emotional involvement and her failure to achieve such a relationship. Her poetry is about self analysis, introspection and looking deep into oneself, which is why she is called one of the best Indian English woman poets of modern times.

Kamala Das has written many poems which describes her preoccupation with death. Mrs. Das's story has also been a story of recurrent attacks of diseases and illnesses. Kamala Das has written quite a few poems on decay, disease and death in her three collections of poems. In her autobiography she wants to drown herself and to find peace in the sea. She was haunted by the idea of suicide because death seems like a mystical experience which she finds desirable because life is not going to be made new. She writes in My Story: "Often I have toyed with the idea of drowning myself; to get rid of my loneliness which is not unique in any way but: is natural to all. I have wanted to find rest in the sea and an escape from involvements". Her life history provides plenty confirmation to her thought of death by hose down, sinking oneself in the sea.

There is submissiveness as well as revolt against a man-dominated world. But there is no escape from conflict, from a sense of sterility. She wants real love but despairs when she doesn't get it. She wants to be dead if there is no love for her. She writes:

If love is not to be had'
I want to be dead ...
While he enter deeper
With joys discovers
The sea's hostile cold
In after all skin –deep
The sea's inner chambers
Are all very warms
There must be a sum slumbering
At vortex of the sea.

(The Old Playhouse and Other Poems)

Another poem, "The Suicide" is constructed as a conversation between the poet and the sea.

"O sea, I am fed up
I want o be simple
I want to be loved
And if love is not to be had,
I want to be dead...

("The Suicide", The Descendants)

One gets a similar sense of death and sea image in her poems. "The invitation" is in a dialogue form between the poetess and the sea, where the sea offers one kind of death.

"The sea garrulous today come in,
Come in, what do you lose by dying, and
Besides, your losses are my gains."

(The invitation)

The 'ache' and sadness arising from her inner self is the symbol of general pain. The symbolic use of the 'sea' indicates her emotional restlessness and sad mood, reciting the self's confessional sense of the melting and disintegrating into nothingness. The 'sea' becomes comforter for her. Throughout her second volume, the sea performs as an objective correlative to her quest for peace.

Gauri Deshpande belongs to the 'confessionalist' mode of Indian poetry in English. She is absolutely lyric poet and the capsule verse is her fort. Memory, nostalgia, and death are some of the key themes in her poems. If the "love" poems relate her to the erotic poets of our tradition, the "death" poems speak for the feminist in her. Pain can be merely redeemed temporarily through momentary escapade and permanently

through death, and like Keats' *Ode to a Nightingale* Deshpande too seems to suggest that the final respite in life from pains of existence can only be sought through death.

The first collection "*between birds*" opens seriously with reflections on death for whom the poet is waiting "impatiently/As I would a tardy lover" because the journey is "deathward slope of life" on 'the sure ground/of death".

Her treatment of love and sexuality shows how much she is dissatisfied with the society which demands silent acceptance from a woman. Though the poet doesn't become shrill like Mamta Kalia and Eunice de Souza who adopt an aggressive tone, yet she is quite aware of the bothering unrest of her life that gives her pain and suffering. She longs for a haven of peace:

"I'm affected by a prowling unrest
And know not what to do
With my fists that clench and unclench
Thoughts come pouring in my eyes
And drain away leaving a whorl of dirt.
If only it'd rain
If only I'd die"
(*Integration*)

There is contradiction in speech and thought in the poetry of Gauri Deshpande. She has not revealed a consistent attitude towards death. Having declared death to be a Reliever, Lover, Friend and Brother, she expresses a very distinct attitude towards death in her other poems. In her poem *Death*, she says:

". . . you are my friend,
My brother who held my hand at every bend,
My lover about whose neck I must fall now"
(*Death*)

However, later on in the poem *The Habit* when she finds death approaching her she presents it as a stranger:

"Now when I see him crossing a street
to me, coming swiftly
How am I going to get used to him,
It's the first time
And I've had no time"
(*The Habit,*)

Again in the poem *Death* she describes of her useless mourning for her lost love. She has varied the line-length within her poems as this mode gives her greater freedom to express the mood and feel of the moment.

"Without wondering how,
when, why, or where
We live and meet with death
Turning a street corner.
But I want to see him coming
Scan his face joyously"
(*Death*)

Repetitions within a line like —The sun poured and poured (Sun 1) and at the beginning of successive lines can be seen in her poetry:

If only it'd rain
"If only I'd die
If only there were someone to fall in love with.
If only the day was all done with"
(*Integration*)

The volume *'The female of species'* is entirely dealt with the feminine arena. There are also poems that handle the concept of death with effectiveness. Appropriate images of color like brown patch, gray blood grass, dusky fall, yellow tipped leaves, yellow winter, to suggest death are used, finally leading to the overwhelming question In the poem, *'The death'*, where the poet is quite mature enough to invite death in the IV party by asking it

"How long must I walk
These long and wind some streets
Before I meet
You?"

(The death')

Deshpande's poems depict humanity in its raw details without any romantic idealization whatsoever. Her treatment of death is casual and bold. She invites death to come and meet her. In order to be gathered into the refuge of her loves arms. Further, recurrence of this willingness is laconically worded in the haiku *"Farewell"*:

"Death has struck a note
Clear and blue on the piano
And I go"

("Farewell")

Pain and suffering has become very easy to her. She has learnt how to cope up with it but ultimately everything is useless she writes:

"I just glimpsed the face in passing
Only mildly familiar, not really know
And wondered at the sudden gust of pain.
After an hour or two it came back again:
It was a face very like your own
Your son or daughter, I'm certain"

(Souvenir)

She expresses her horror at the mere thought of death in Kalpavraksha. She wishes for rain and it pours down. The poet says:

"I was frightened thinking
This fatality of fulfillment
would lead me into strange
Lands,"

(Kalpavraksha)

Keki N. Daruwalla writes: "Gauri Deshpande's poetry deals with the minutiae of everyday life, the coming of a lover, the death of a puppy dog, ingratitude of children. Everything is grist to her mill, from city with greasy caress and harsh endearments to a trees cape." She seeks fulfillment from other men but in each experience the beloved is destined to be shocked by unfulfillment. Her collection of poems shows her overwhelming frustration leading to the final desire of death. In some of her poems she transcends beyond and relates herself to the larger perspective.

Kamala Das is preoccupied with death, decay, failure and frustration in love. Her canvas becomes wider and imagery more original and modern. Indian English Poetry has come of age with enduring charm, enchanting range and amazing authenticity. Kamala Das occupies a pre-eminent position among contemporary poets with her astounding imagery, new idiom and honest portrayal of Indian women and their concerns. She seemed to imagine overwhelming this dualism only through death. Das's poems are filled with yearnings for death, especially to drown in the sea. As a confessional poet she narrates her personal experience but slowly from the personal and the particular she raises to the general and the universal.

Gauri Deshpande also strongly feels that a woman has to compromise and adapt to the circumstances she is situated in. But at the same time in such circumstances she can neither have tranquility, nor peace of

mind. A frustration results from the shock and despair she experiences in her life. She develops the habit of pain and the clench of surviving in a surroundings that is meaningless.

In *Habit*, she says all dying and her living has become her habit when she grew up.

"I go over it

I got used to it

All dying and my living"

(*The Habit*,)

WORKS CITED:

- Amga, H.L. *Indo-English Poetry*. Jaipur: Surbhi Publications, 1999
- Bajaj, Rashmi. *Women Indo-Anglian Poets: A Critique*. New Delhi: Asian, 1996.
- Beniwal, Anup. —Identity, Experience, Aesthetic: Indian Women's Poetry in English. Occasional Papers, 1999.
- Chavan, Sunanda P. *Modern Indian English Women Poets: An Overview. Perspective on Indian Poetry in English*. Ed. M.K. Naik. New Delhi: Abhinav Publication, 1984.
- Daruwalla, K.N. *Confessional Poetry as Social Commentary: A View of Indian Poetry in English by Indian Women Poets. Contemporary Indian English Poetry*. Ed. Atma Ram. Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1989
- Das, Kamala, *My Story*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 1976
- Das, Kamala. *Summer in Calcutta*. Kottayam: DC Books, 2004.
- Das, Kamala, *The Descendants*. Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1967.
- Deshpande, Gauri.. *Between Births*. Calcutta: Writers Workshop. 1968
- Deshpande, Gauri.. *Lost Love*. Calcutta: Writers Workshop. 1970
- De Souza, Eunice. *Kamala Das, Gauri Deshpande, Mamta Kalia. Contemporary Indian Poetry in English*. Ed. Saleem Peeradina. Delhi: Macmillan, 1997.
- Dwivedi, A. N. *Kamala Das and Her Poetry*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2000.
- Iyengar, K.R. Srinivasa. *Indian Writing in English*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 2007.
- Kaur, Iqbal. ed. *Perspectives on Kamala Das's Prose*. New Delhi: Intellectual Publishing House, 1995.
- Naik, M.K. *A History of Indian English Literature*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1982
- Rahman, Anisur. *Expressive Form in the Poetry of Kamala Das*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publication, 1981
-