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CONFESSIONAL STUDIES: VOICE OF DEPRESSED WOMEN IN KAMALA DAS' POETRY

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ABSTRACT

The writing style of confessional poetry, in the late 1950's, appears in the American poetry and the poets elicit implicitly or explicitly their own mental complex, problem, depression, extra-marital affair, psychological fact and experience in their poetries. Actually, the subject matter of personal poetry is about their own self. The term "confession" is coined in 1959 by Rosenthal, however, Sylvia Plath, Robert Lowell, Anne Sexton, John Berryman, Allen Ginsberg and Randal Jarrel who are pioneered with the writing skill of the confessional poetry in U.S. A. All these poets confess their self mental breakdown, drug addiction, difficulties, loveless marriage, abusive nature and misunderstanding in their poetries. A.N.Dwivedi says: "All confessional poetry springs from the need to confess and so each poem cast in this mode is in some way, a declaration of dependence, or of guilt, or of anguish and sufferings', in the Postmodern era, the confessional poetry, in general, anatomizes the crucial moment of the personal suicide, embarrassment, sexually, taboo, physical injury, mental suffering, the psyche, nuptial, hymeneal, marital experience and trauma. Hence Rosenthal remarks: "beyond customary bounds of reticence or personal embarrassment". Kamala Das, in her poems, reveals honestly the real picture, social images, personal voices and feeling of the women, emotions, thoughts, life story and feministic outlooks. Titled paper shall attempt to synthesis and portray the real and substantial themes and techniques of the personal voice for the patriarchal Women. This term paper will focus on *An Introduction, Sunshine Cat, Stone Age and Composition* to show the personal voice of the Indian women.

**Keywords:** The result of loveless marriage, frustration, the ruined picture of her marital life, the patriarchal society.

The present study shall endeavor to highlight the personal tone, alienation, endless quest and love of the female persona. The countless frustration, torture and mental depression and oppression in her poetry appear from her tender age, mate-domination and mostly due to the futile, fruitless and unhappy sexual relationship with her own husband K. Madhav Das and other male partners. Disastrous consequence of loveless marriage is the central issue in the poetry of Das. For the women, this devastating picture of a

mismatched and loveless marriage in the lustful and sensual life of Kamala Das is extremely sprouted in most of her confessional poems. As an Indian confessional poetess, like American women poets – Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton, She herself confesses that only authentic and heart touching love can give a female person emotional, sensual as well as spiritual gratification in marriage or martial life, while she, suffering badly at the ruthless and merciless hands of her husband from the wedding night to her last motherhood span, Sarah Lucia

Hoagland and Marilyn Frye remark:" In order to understand the implication of this process it is necessary to grasp the fundamental fact that women have had the power of naming stolen from us .Women have not been free to use their own power to name themselves, the world, or God. The old naming was not the product of dialogue..a fact inadvertently admitted in the Genesis story of Adam's naming the animals and the women. Women are now realizing that the universal imposing of names by men has been false...To exist humanly is to name the self, the world and God." "They did this to her" (The Sunshine Cut , line1) ,this quoted line refers to her extramarital lovers after her marriage with K. Madhav Das, who comes in contact with Kamala Das and ruthlessly and unkindly treats her as a subject, "The man she loved, who loved her not enough"(The Sunshine Cut line 2), this quoted line refers to her own husband whom she really loves in the starting point. But he loves her physically and bodily but not passionately and spiritually, only for the pleasure and gratification of his useful and sexual desires. Actually she is used by her husband like a slave. "The husband who neither loved nor used her, but was a ruthless watcher"(The Sunshine Cut, line 3-4), refers to her cruel and ruthless husband who never thinks of Kamala Das as a wife when she suffers badly with her mental and physical desire, her husband does not care of her, he only thinks of his physical satisfaction. Hence in such condition, she fulfills her sexual and useful desire by her other extra-marital lovers, yet her husband tells her nothing in such relationship with other men. For all these reasons, she herself calls him 'Coward' and 'Selfish'. Here she is sexually as well as mentally misused by her husband and other male partners whom she loves really but never gets her needful emotional and sexual satisfaction in return. It is one-sided sexual relationship in her marital life with husband and other partners.Francis Bacon's statement in "Of Marriage and Single Life": "Wives are young men's mistresses; companions for middle age; and old men's nurses"[16]. *The sunshine Cat* is a confessional poem where she displays the devastating result of her mismatched and loveless marriage. In all her marital life, she suffers out of depression, suppression, despair, want of love, sex,

and physical satisfaction due to her loveless marriage. For all these she writes:-

"They did this to her, the men who knew her,  
The man, she loved, who loved her not enough.  
Being selfish, and coward, the husband who,  
Neither loved her nor used her, but was a  
Ruthless watcher .....

TO target, oh, to target ..... and they said  
each of them,

I do not love, I can not love, it is not in my  
nature to love, but

I can be kind to you..."

("The sunshine Cat, summer in Calcutta")

In the poetry of Kamala Das, a heartrending feeling and heart-breaking passion for love and lust are available. She has ever to endure family torture of her husband. So she laid weeping on the bed alone and moisturized the bedcover with her farlon and heart-rending tears. In this context, the critic, O.J. Thomas says, "her search for love and kindness ends up in a barren wasteland, where there is neither life nor hope. She spends her life in agony and frustrations, repenting and weeping most of the time" (Kamala Das : The Tragedy of Life is not Death but Growth).She says that in her poem, *The Invitation* ,"She had dreams of a loving husband who could provide her the bliss of a paradise. Instead, she feels the heat of a funeral pyre with her head constantly burning" (The Invitation). Finally she loses her saga city while she is compelled to the bed against her wishes, she has been totally dominated and exploited by her husband and her other lovers. However Kamala Das's frustration in her marital and extra-marital relationships are nothing but a devastating result of her mismatched and loveless marriage. Hence she writes;

"They let her slide from pegs of sanity into a  
bed made soft with tears and she lay there  
weeping.

For sleep had lost its, use; I shall build walls with  
tears.

She said, walls to shut me in..... Her husband  
shut her.

In, every morning, locked her in a room of  
Books". ("The Sunshine Cats")

She raises her personal voice against the  
exploitation and domination of the patriarchal

society as well as an Indian citizen. Her female awareness and effort show the way of freedom and spirituality. She is a bilingual writer who uses honesty and nakedly her protesting tone bringing dignity, love and respect in the male-dominated society for the Indian repressed women. "An Introduction" (Summer in Calcutta) is one of the first protesting poems of Das, taken from "Summer in Calcutta". Thus in "An Introduction; Kamala Das confesses openly her pain, anguish and teasing of her physical growth as well as suffering of her marriage life. "Her sad women body felt so beaten" refers to the central source of her youthful anguish, pain and loveless marital life. "The weight of my breasts and womb crushed me" (An Introduction) refers to her physical growth which she acknowledges innocently. She changes her shirt and wears her brother's trousers and ignores her womanliness. Jayakrishan Nair writes: - "This agony of growth is expressed but in an ironic tone.

"I was child, and they told me I grew, Far I became tall, my limbs swelled and one or two places aprouded hairs". (An Introduction)

Here she reveals the identity of women approach through her creative language and aspiring thought. Z.F Molvi thus writes in "Kamala: Homeless in the city", if one wants to read her poetry directly, it is better to begin with her poems *An Introduction* and *A Faded Epaulet on His Shoulder* (P.103).

Both the poems reveal much information about her political knowledge, creative talent, bitter experiences, in married life, her illicit love affairs, frustration and loneliness and above all her quest for identity, an attempt for self-exploration and self-integration. So she writes openly and

#### **A Ruined Picture of Marital Life**

Her poems show all the evidence of her married life in a confessional manner. A number of pain, anguish, disillusionment and alienation as well as of love, emotional feeling for physical and mental gratification are highly, reflected in her poem *The Stone Age*, driven from her third poetic collection, *The Oldplay House and other poems*, She herself confesses that she feels disappointed with her skin's colour. She recalls her father's responsibility for her colour of skin because her father tells in loud to her grandmother to apply turmeric and oil on her skin to

make her skin fair. Thus he has been married to a man who is much older than her."The modern and contemporary poetry of women is a social, literary and linguistic document on feminism, Post-modernism and Post-colonialism"(King,201). During their marital life, she admired her husband, but yet she cannot have any account of love, affection from her husband as a wife. She expresses her personal tone in *My Story*, "I had expected him to take me in his arms and stroke my face, hair, my hands and whispered loving words. I had expected him to be all that I wanted my father and mother. I wanted conversation, companionship and warmth. Sex was far from my thoughts". She further says I was a victim of a young man's carnal hunger and perhaps out of our union, there would born a few children".

In *Stone Age*, she herself confessionally asserts that in her husband's house, she neither gets affection nor ideal love, nor soft and sweet whispering word from her husband in her marital life. The entire poem represents a ruined, disillusionment as well as suffering picture of her married life. Due to all these unhappy and discomfort life story she starts advancing her relationship in a great hope of finding true and ideal love, but her hard effort and hope turn into a barren land. She says in *Stone Age* that in her marriage life, here is not place for emotional love affair and useful desire which she wants of having from her husband. We all know that a woman does not wish to lose her identity and liberty in society. So she starts disgusting her certain plight which ruins her life mentally and physically. As her husband does not try to give her any mental physical as well as spiritual gratification and peace in her marital life, she openly goes to the other extra-marital partners to fulfill her passionate hunger, created by her selfish and lascivious husband. In *Stone Age*, Kamala Das herself summons her husband an 'Old fat spider' because he does not treat her as a human being but as an object, and destroys beautiful life in the name of love. Her stone-hearted and selfish husband turns her soft and sweet life into a "bird of stone" and "Granite Dove". He thus makes Das's life a stone life. Hence she calls him disgustingly an old fat spider" who weaves a "web of bewilderment" as a trap around

her life. Actually the *Stone Age* portrays a devastating picture of Kamala Das disgusting and disobeyed married life with her selfish, kindless and stone-hearted husband in the particular world. She writes:

"Fond husband, ancient shelter in the mind, Old fat spider, weaving webs of bewilderment. Be kind, you turn me into a bird of stone. A granite Dove ....." (Stone Age)

M.L.Rosenthal remarks:"In the confessional poems the private life of the poet himself, especially under stress of psychological crisis, becomes a major theme"(Perloff 471) .Thus her loveless and mismatched marriage leads her innocent life towards a futile and disgusting life, instead of love, sex and affection she begins to beg for a peaceful life but her request and effort became failure in her marital life. So for her passionate hunger she expects love and sexual pleasure. When she goes out by a "Blue Battered Car", the neighbors look at her activities and comments on her and then "go like train". "His hand sways like a hooded snake, before it clasps my pubis", refers to sexual feeling of her useful husband. Another expression, "a great true, felled, he slumps against my breasts and sleeps" perhaps the sexual intercourse of their married life. Here she shows honestly and passionately a picture of her conjugal life through feministic outlooks and personal voice. She further writes desperately.

"Ask me, everybody, ask me, what he sees, In me, ask me why he is called alien, a lifetime, ask me the flavor of his mouth, ask me why his hand sways life.

A headed snake.

Before it elapses any pubis. Ask me why life, a great tree, felled he slumps, against my breasts, and sleeps.

Ask me why life is short and love is shorter still, ask me what is bliss and what its price ....." (Stone Age)

Sex, love, affection and liberty for life are acquired in marital life. but Kamala Das is a mendicant of love, affection, Robert Lowell says, "Everything in these poems are personal, confessional and felt. It also portrays the acute sense of depersonalisation and fragmentation of 1650s America for

women."(Annas.p), and sexual affair for her selfish and stone hearted husband who never tries to fulfill her useful demand in continued in her most of poems. Failure in marital life makes sometimes her life poisonous. She looks everywhere for an authentic love and spiritual gratification but she gets it merely in her poetic dream. For all these mental disturbances, at last, she wants to lead a rightful and liberal life. Therefore she wants honestly:

"When I got married  
My husband said,  
You may have freedom,  
As much as you want".  
(COMPOSITION)

After tolerating a countless oppression and pain, insult and humiliation at the house of her husband, she wants to take a shelter in the sea and wishes to remain far from female –subjugating society where for her sexual desires and hungers is nothing but only mental and physical torture and exploitation as well as depression, so as an Indian confessional poet, she knows openly her last hope and intention to the male-dominated society of contemporary Indian in her quoted lines:

"Excavade  
Deep, deep pain  
To be frank  
I have tailed  
I feel my age and my uselessness  
All I want now is to take a long walk  
Into the sea  
And lie there, resting, completely  
Uninvolved."  
(COMPOSITION)

#### Conclusion

Kamala Das is an Indian women poet who confesses all her man-women relationship in her marital life. She expresses futility of a ruined marital relationship in her most of poems. All the problems of women life in the male-dominating world are the central themes in her poetry .E.V.Ramakrishnan says:"Comparing to the poems of Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath, and Theodore Roethke, the poems of Kamala Das lack in the unifying stream that has to run through the various shifting moods. Her poems are need of a patient writing and compressed and dynamic on the verge of bursting"(34).Search for

ideal love and husband emerges from her poems which reveal her own personal voice, identify and marital life story. All of these are more effective and acceptable in the modern Indian woman's life. The devastating consequence of a loveless marriage, identify of womanhood, ruined picture of the marital life as well as sexual harassment are present in her poems. She wants to deconstruct the strong pillar of patriarchal world with her protesting voice.

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