

WOMAN'S DEFIANCE AGAINST FATE IN THE WORKS OF KAMALA DAS AND JUDITH WRIGHT

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Abstract:

The present paper attempts to underline the peculiarly feminine tone and temper in their poetical utterances. The paper being of comparative nature draws illustrations at places to focus on their similarities or dissimilarities (as the case may be) in one way or the other of all Indian English poets, Kamala Das occupies a distinctive place by her strong subjectivism, her fiery imagination, her sweep of verses, and her unique power of evoking the pathos of womankind. In my view, Kamala Das is 'The most aggressively individualistic' because she has an inward eye and a thinking mind to look into the passions and pathos of women and to lay blank the secretive depths of their delicate hearts. And she does so with all the integrity of her character and all the compassions of her heart, as a true 'confessional' poet.

Keywords: *Defiance against Fate, works, individualistic etc*

Kamala Das and Judith Wright are the two distinguished names in Commonwealth Literature today, and they are well-known for their 'confessional'

mode of expression, for their honest perspective of men-women relationships. In articulating their thoughts and feelings in an inhibited fashion, they throw challenges to the age-old customs and traditions - more courageous and challenging. After all, every sensible person knows that any tangible human relationship can flourish within the bounds of society. Both Das and Wright know this truth and react to their respective situations in an individualistic manner, giving a free expression to their opinions and perceptions without getting bogged down by any extraneous considerations. For this, they have earned worldwide acclaim and approbation.

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depths of their delicate hearts. And she does so with all the integrity of her character and all the compassions of her heart, as a true 'confessional' poet. In the poem "The Old Playhouse", she writes thus:

.....You called me wife,
I was taught to break saccharine
into your tea and
To offer at the right moment the
vitamins. Cowering
Beneath your monstrous ego, I ate
the magic loaf and
Became a dwarf (1973: 1)

Living in metropolitan cities like Bombay and Calcutta has only aggravated her misery and loneliness. On the contrary, Judith Wright's married life has been one of smooth sailing with a perfect understanding of her man. In this regard, Wright says, "I have been lucky in my relationship with men, especially with my husband with whom I worked in a kind of intellectual symbiosis" (1981: 104). But the arranged marriage of Kamala Das at the age of fifteen - it is nothing short of a child - marriage has taken a different course because of the insensitivity of her office - working husband. She writes of him thus: "My husband was immersed in his office - work, and after work, there was the dinner, followed by sex. Where was there any time left for him to want to see the sea or the dark buffaloes of the slopes?"

There is a grain of truth about it, though some other women writers like Das, Sylvia Plath, and Anne Sexton have come up very fast to contend this assertion.

O those, Das and Sylvia have suffered considerably in love and marriage. She becomes upset, and in a rebellious mood utters aloud:

I shall someday leave, leave the
cocoon

.....
.....
.....

"A Relationship" (1965: 52)

Though there are a few references to Lord Krishna in Das's autobiography, *My Story*, (1976: 92 - 197) they hang on a tenuous thread and are too fragile to sustain. As contrasted to the unrequited and tension - ridden love of Das, we have the soft and satisfied sort of love in Wright. Take the latter's poem "Woman to Man" as an illustration of it.

This is the strength that your arm
knows,

.....
.....

the intricate and folded rose. (1971:
29)

This kind of relationship has the power to transcend the barriers of flesh and passion; it tends to confirm that love and marriage are sanctimonious things and not merely a social or legal contract between a man and a woman. Eliot in *The Waste Land* (1922) laments the erosion of moral and spiritual values in modern man, especially in the sphere of love-making.

They offer a sense of fulfilment and contentment - that she is the mother of man. In the role of mother, a woman is not

different from the earth (which also produces all kinds of trees, fruits, flowers, grains, etc. The fourth and last stanza of "Woman to Child" highlights this truth.

I wither and you break from me;
.....
the link that joins you to the night.

Judith Wright has very graphically portrayed here the mother's role in child-bearing. She is the subsequent feeder to the child and forms a solid link with it.

Feminine sensibility is largely discovered in the writings of sensitive women endowed with imagination, especially when they treat such subjects as menstruation, child-bearing, child-rearing, and motherhood. These are the subjects solely reserved for them. If a male writer speaks of them, he will sound hollow and theoretical. Only a Judith Wright could compose such verses as the following:

You who were darkness warmed
my flesh
.....
.....
.....
.

hung upon my dreaming blood,

A child is generated out of 'darkness and chaos; the mother's womb signals this 'darkness'. As we know, the child is the creation of the mother's 'flesh' or ovum and the father's 'seed'. Particularly the 'blood' of the mother lends shape and strength to the fetus in her womb. In "Women to Child", the mother imagines herself as the 'well' containing the maternal

waters of procreation. Eliot employs the symbols of 'the pool' and the 'lotus' to denote the procreative involvements of the two sexes.

Without learning or teaching the art of living, humanity will remain entangled in the fires (Collected Poems, p.34), and illusion.

To conclude, Kamala Das and Judith Wright are the two finest flowers in the Muse's bower. They are so because they have articulated their feelings and thoughts, hopes and fears, without any inhibitions. Artistically Judith may be superior, but Kamala excels in lyricism and sweep of verses. They both are, however, at their best when they reveal the delicacy, the subtlety, and the mystery of womankind. A woman's craving for love, her involvement in sex, her significant role in procreation and child-rearing; all find an outlet in the compositions of these writers. They take their readers into confidence and lay bare their inmost longings and aspirations. There are so many common things between them (as seen in the second section of this paper), but they differ in their attitude to their husbands.... one is so soft, the other so bitter and to love and
("Woman to Child" Collected Poems, p.34)

Both poets remain honest and sincere in their expressions, and they appeal to us so much today for their typically feminine sensibility.

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