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FEMINIST CONCERNS IN THE POETRY OF KAMALA DAS

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ABSTRACT

Today, literary, critical and feminist territorial boundaries are not as clear cut as they were imagined to be even a decade ago when modes of communication between scholars and between audience in the First and Third Worlds were much slower. Speed has not created equality among all critical voices, but nevertheless, we are at a new site, one that approaches what we might call "global literary studies in English"- a situation that requires a radical rethinking of the claims we have become accustomed to making when we produce literary scholarship. We can no longer claim knowledge of how literary text function as cultural artefacts and as political tools without thinking hard about how such text might play out in other locations; we cannot proceed with our scholarly projects oblivious to how our work speaks to scholarship or readerships produced from different locations.

INTRODUCTION

Kamala Das has the distinction of being one of the best known Indian women writers in the twentieth century writing in two Indian languages, English and Malayalam. Mrs. Das is the author of many autobiographical works and novels in both languages, several highly regarded collections of poetry in English, numerous collections of short stories, as well as essays on a wide range of topics. Her work in English has been widely anthologized in the Indian subcontinent, Australia, and the West; and she has won numerous awards for her writing, including the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1985 and the nomination for the Nobel Prize in literature in 1984. From the 1970s when her career was at its peak, to late 1990s, India –based, English - language literary critics have written extensively on Kamala Das. Yet, in this criticism all the non hetero normative protests and pleasures in My Story were straightened out. This state of affairs emerges in part because, as elsewhere, many India – based, English language literary feminist have a highly developed sense of patriarchal oppression but do not feel any compulsion or urgency to work through the links between heterosexism and the oppressive weight of patriarchal systems, their work on Das has tended to make her metonymic of their larger feminist projects. Hence, although mainstream literary and literary feminist criticism in India (as well as in postcolonial feminist criticism produced from outside India) offers considerable discussion of sexuality in Das's works, such discussion continues to be almost exclusively on heterosexual relationship in these texts. In particular, the material in My Story that concerns same sex desire or is otherwise

too disruptive or contradictory to be of use to literary feminism is simply dismissed in the criticism as manifestation of Das's stylistic or personal eccentricities that border on artistic weakness.

Feminism in India and elsewhere: where does she fit in?

In India, as in most locations today, there are multiple feminisms whose founding ideologies and practices differ dramatically. Thus, outside of literary readings of women's writing in English, feminist commentary from the Indian subcontinent has produced groundbreaking work on the ways in which the colonial and / or nationalist state has used gender and sexuality to its advantage and concurrently to the disadvantage of women whose lives are subject to such authority. The sexual economics of modern India , India-based feminist Mary John and Janaki Nair have cautioned that " a focus on the conspiracy of silence regarding sexuality in India ,whether within political and social movements or in scholarship," must not blind us to the multiple sites where "sexuality" has long been embedded. In the spheres of the law, demography or medicine, for instance, sexuality enjoys a massive and indisputable presence that is far from prohibited .Indian feminists have worked extensively on sexuality in these contexts, and this scholarship is at the forefront of globally cited feminist theorizing that works to reach a decolonized understanding of the relations of power and gender. Yet, as Jacqual Alexander has succinctly noted, even in feminist critiques that are cognizant of the importance of sexuality to institutional apparatus, much work remains to be done on elaborating the processes of heterosexualization at work within the state apparatus. More specifically, literary feminism that champions Indian women's writing in English operates within and against the parameters of a middle class notion of women's worth. From the1970s to the present, feminist critics writing on Das have been willing to celebrate and second her critique of the institution of marriage, and of marital rape, of the obligation to wifely fidelity in marriage at all costs but not her critique of heterosexuality itself. Following Alexander, one could argue that such feminist projects unintentionally fall into the service of the state by striving to make heterosexual and reproductive roles (that are so necessary to the state and to citizenship) more amendable to women.

Already well known in literary circles for her poetry in English, it was the publication of My Story that earned Kamala Das national notoriety among the English –speaking elite in India. My Story is to that the best-selling women's autobiography in post- independence India. Vincent O" Sullivan notes that when My Story appeared in book form in 1976, it went through six impressions and thirty six thousand copies in eleven months. My Story is a chronologically ordered linear narrative written in a realist style. It follows Kamala's life from age four through British colonial and missionary schools favoured by the colonial Indian elite ; through her sexual awakening ; an early and seemingly disastrous marriage; her growing literary career; extramarital affairs; the birth of her three sons ; and finally, a slow but steady coming to terms with her spouse, writing and sexuality. My Story set the terms in which Das's entire body of work has been evaluated by feminists and other scholars in the subcontinent and in the West. The standard Indian literary feminist reading of Das's works commands her for her determined protest against patriarchal norms and practices that oppress women and for her courage in continuously mining her own life experience for material. Thus, much of this feminist championing of Mrs. Das was intended as a corrective to the mainstream, masculinist reading of My Story as titillating trash.

Outside the subcontinent, feminist literary critics who have written on Das have taken their cue from the local feminism which Das's work is shaped by and shapes in true. For instance, the United States based scholars Ketu Katrak ,Harveen Sachdeva Mann and Shirley Geok-Lin-Lim have variously pulled Das into discussions on gendered resistance in the writing by Third World women. .Katrak reads Das alongside Bessie Head arid works through the themes of "mothering and m-othering" in their work. On sexuality in My Story, Katrak writes: "In Das, the sexuality is often so completely self-absorbed, so navel gazing as to become both narrowly personal and problematically sensationalized and voyeuristic." Mann reads Das's work and three other texts in English by South Asian women through a feminist framework that is attentive to the stakes of minority communities in Indian nationalist discourses. Mann read these women writers in order "not only to underscore their contestations of the dominant patriarchal national discourse but also to articulate the

heterogeneity and plurality operative within sub continental women's resistance". Lim's essays elaborate on the theme of self-empowerment in Das's writing by reading her within the context of Asian women writers and the larger context provided by a materialist analysis of Asian women . These scholars do not disturb the heterosexist logic of the usual considerations of sexuality in Das's work. Although this reveals the usual biases of literary criticism, more importantly, it also demonstrates their scholarly allegiance to one of postcolonial feminism's most important injunctions. What feminist postcolonial theory advocates to feminists located in the First World is as follows : First , we are urged to read outside the western traditional canon ; second , we are, as far as possible, to read Third World women writers with due emphasis given to the local context of their reception ; third, in the best case scenario we are to read these texts alongside the local feminist interpretations of their of feminist value .Marilyn Friedman sets forth feminist guidlines for postcolonial studies in the 1990s, which is mostly accepted by Euro – American based feminist scholars.

In an essay titled "The Burden Of English" published in a collection on English Literary Studies in India , Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak urges that we pay due attention to the "implied reader " of any text. Spivak writes: "The figure of the implied reader is constructed within a consolidated system of cultural representation. The appropriate culture in this context is the one supposedly indigenous to the literature under consideration." However, this concern for the context that is supposedly indigenous to Kamala Das leads scholars to pay little attention either to same sex desire in Das's work or to heterosexuality from the vantage point of the non hetero normative. Given this situation, a queer reading of Das's work, originating as it does from the South Asian diaspora, has no option but to accept the implications of going against the interpretive direction set by local feminist readings of Das's work. This encounter of one local feminisim with another local feminism under the sign of diaspora is a scenario that is worth examining, not just for the purposes of this rereading of Kamala Das but also beacuse diaspora studies provide a productive albeit tight discursive space that has been carved out in a rapidly changing world. As the anthology Same - sex love in India: Readings from Literature and History makes clear, there has been a long history of India -based writing on same -sex desire. This Anthology, edited by Rutu Vanita and Saleem Kidwai, showcases Indian writings on same - sex "love," in various genres, over a period of more than 2,000 years, translated from more than a dozen languages. In recent years there has been an increased volume of discussion on same-sex desire and homosexuality produced in Indian cultural / academic / literary contexts. Ashwini Sutthankar's groundbreaking edited collection of autobiographical "Coming out" narratives, fiction poetry by the Indian lesbians, titled Facing the Mirror : Lesbian writing from India , along with the controversies surrounding Deepa Mehta's 1996 film Fire in which two Indian sisters- in-law embark on a sexual relationship with each other has brought homo sexuality to the attention of the Indian popular and academic press . Given the current proliferation of new media and modes of communication, access to queer networks is not the exclusive privilege of those located in geographic West. And in the last few years there is a growing cross continental queer discourage that has gained in visibility and assurance with every new cultural production. This article then could be read as yet another product of this cross continental discussion.

In an essay titled "Multiple Medication: Feminist Scholarship in the age of Multinational Reception," Lata Mani makes several thoughtful connections between "the question of positionality and location and their relation to the production of knowledge as well as its reception." Mani writes of presenting her ground breaking work on sati to audience in the United States, Britain, and India and of her surprise in learning that there different audiences saw completely different aspects of her work as "politically significant" .Following Mani, it is seen that Indian literary feminist see the protest against patriarchal oppression as the most politically significant feature of Das's work. Within such feminist plotting, it is Das's extramarital (hetero) sexual adventures that mount this protest against patriarchy. The same – sex encounters and erotics that abound within these pages, if noted at all are immediately dismissed as distractions or as further proof of the distortions that patriarchal oppression forces on women.

The Queerness

In the same ways, Das is the perfect "queer writer". Her work is centrally preoccupied with sexuality and female pleasure that breaks out of a hetero normative matrix. Her work exemplifies the "resistance to the regimes of the normal" that Michael Warner has identified as the hallmark of queer. From the 1990s onward, queer theory has offered a terminology and a set of interpretive tools that can explicate deviations from both heterosexual and homosexual conventions. And unlike more disciplinarily anchored interpretive models, "no particular project is metonymic of queer commentary" as Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner have noted. Of course, Das herself utilized the term "queer" for its sexual and, on occasion, homosexual purchase. In her most widely anthologized poem, "An Introduction", first published in 1965, Das uses "queerness" in the plural to indicate her multiple deviance from multiple norms. She writes of her choice to write in English and Malayalam as follows: "Why not leave/Me alone, critics,friends ,visiting cousins,/Every one of you ? Let me speak in Any language I like. The language I speak Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses,/All mine, mine alone."

In Composition (1967), another often anthologized poem, she concludes a section with the flat declaration: "I have lost my best friend/ to a middle – aged queer,/The lesbians hiss their love at me." Das's use of queer marks both a continuity and a break with the term's pre-sexual connotations. Clearly, her understanding of "queer" does not neatly overlap with the current usages of the term by queer theorists, even though both usages share a common late nineteenth / early twentieth century history of the association of the term with homosexuality. For Das "queer" signifies sexually and otherwise thus, at times exceeding the term's dimensions in queer theory.

One might argue that although the category of "queer" might provide a precise understanding of the complex texture of Das's texts, such export of Western oriented theory reveals its "locality" when transported. A more complicated and more accurate assessment is offered in Johan and Nair's "Introduction to A question of silence", in which they thoughtfully contest the very distinction between the "West" and "non west" in the course of articulating their unwillingness to proffer "Indian" theories of sexuality. In response to the hypothetical question "Why bring up western theories (of sexuality) at all?" they write that our response would be that "the West" is at once a particular geographical place and a relation, from where we are, this relation is one of domination ,and about as complicated as they came; to all intents and purposes. We are effectively located in the west. It is to the credit of feminist in India that they have refused to be silenced by accusations of being Western – identified, and so unable to deal with the real India . Ironically enough the very conception of the other of the West as being something to which Western concepts do not apply is itself a western legacy. Such constructions of cultural difference leave the West firmly in command.

The usage of the term "queer" in this article is mindful of both Das's usage and ongoing reformulations produced by queer commentary. Das's work queers our understanding of queer. Most importantly, it enlarges (in both chronological and spatial dimension) the very notion of "queer" which is usually imagined as a purely First World phenomenon from the 1990s. Given that "queer" is constantly reformulated in usage, rather than attempt to work out at a viable, global definition of the term, a more productive approach would be to focus on the issue of queer methodology as set forth by Judith Halberstam in female Masculinity. According to Halberstan, a queer methodology is a "scavenger methodology" that focuses on what has been deliberately or accidentally excluded from traditional studies. Further, Halberstam notes that a queer methodology attempts to combine methods that are often cast as being at odds with each other, and it refuses the academic compulsion to work toward disciplinary coherence."

The conflict between passivity and rebellion against the male – oriented universe emerges as a major theme in her poetry. The poetess is quite alive to her feminity, asserts it and celebrates it in one poem after another. As Devindra Kohli puts it, "her poetry is in the final analysis an acknowledgement and a celebration of the beauty and courage of being a woman, Kamala Das is essentially a poet of the modern Indian women's ambivalence, giving expression to it more nakedly than any other Indian women poet with the possible exception of Amrita Pritam in Punjabi. The reason for this is that Mrs. Das seems to have a good deal of the conventional woman in her make up, so that not only can she speak of the common women and her basic

need for love and security with inside Knowledge, but cannot help, in addition, expressing an ambivalence proceeding from her own duality, proceeding from, that is, the combination in herself of a need for domestic security and the desire for an independence, an independence not consistent with a domestic mode of living." She was a social rebel, and like all rebels against the accepted social norms, frustration and disillusionment were her lot in life, and her self-expression in her poetry is therapeutic. Her poetry mirrors her life in all its nakedness – the experienced horrors and the rear joys of love. "Her life itself violated the chiselled, systematic and traditional norms and values and she affirms to a form of life which is characterized by the unconventional and extremely modern point of view. The form of life is truly reflected in the form she achieves in her poetic practice .There is no conventional metrical form but free verse, a harvest of imagery with which she identifies herself, rather exclusively, a choice of diction usually envenomed and pointed . It is appropriate to say that Kamala Das creates a free form, shaking all the established norms of life and art. She was unconventional in life and she is equally unconventional in her diction, and in her verse form. In this lies her distinctness and originality, but from also this results much that is shocking, much that is obscure and immoral .Thus in "The Looking Glass" the woman persona stands naked with her lover before a mirror, admires his male anatomy even "the jerky way in which he urinates."

"In The Stone Age", the husband is spoken of as an "old, fat spider", and when the husband leaves she drives to "the other man", the lover, and the deed is done. It is an act of defiance, an assertion of her freedom, a breaking away from the dull routine of domesticity. Then the lines suddenly spring to life with the energy of her questioning "Ask me, everybody, ask me /What he sees in me,ask me why he is called a lion,/ A libertine, ask me the flavor of his/Mouth and ask me why his hand sways like a hooded snake/Before it clasps my pubis./ Ask me why like/A great tree, felled, he stumps against my breasts/ And sleep, ask me why life is short and love is/Shorter still, ask me what is bliss and what its price..." Countless are the poems in which her uninhibited treatment of the human anatomy and physical aspects of sexual love, have exposed her to the charge of obscenity, of "wallowing in the filth and mire of sex". Critic after critic has stressed the essential feminine sensibility of Kamala Das, but they have usually erred in pin – pointing its source. Kamala Das has a fiercely feminine sensibility that dares without inhabitations to articulate the hurts it has received in an intensive, largely, man- made world. She is intensely conscious of herself as a woman .Her vision is vitally particularized by the women's point of view.

The Erotic and the Sensual

In her poems the emphasis is largely on sexual love and female organs while feminine sensibility, in the real sense of the term, implies stress on emotional bond and an attitude which the women poets alone can achieve .Kamala Das's feminine sensibility is not to be found in her frank confessions of her sexual life or in a detailed description of female organs. It is expressly manifested in her attitude to love, in the ecstasy she experiences in receiving love and the agony which she feels when jilted in it. It is also seen in poems like "Beauty was a Short Season" in which she expresses her fear that her youth and beauty would soon be no more: "Happiness,/Yes/That was a moment or two/And beauty/A short season…/For what hazy cause we outlive/Like gnarled fruit trees/The fecund season?" Both happiness and beauty are transients. Living in the short season one outlives the season as gnarled fruits do, but only for a "hazy cause". The qualifying epithets, "hazy" and "fecund" pinpoint the futility of existence. Not for a moment do we miss the central concern of the poet which is characterized by a typical feminine awareness".

Kamala Das's feminine sensibility is also fully expressed in her poem "The Music Party" in which the woman's desire to feel the warmth of love while the music lasts is followed by the agonies of dereliction when she is left alone: "I wish my/Eyes were similarly/Brave and had looked at you/At least once before the/Singing stooped and you left/Quickly, without goodbye..." "The aroma of feminism is obviously reflected in her silent eyes which are not similarly brave and cannot look into his eyes to prompt a response .His leaving the place without saying a goodbye", is the final jolt she receives . She reveals her typical feminine persona by being love-lorn without a word to say. Instances are various to illustrate her feminine sensibility, particularly in those poems which she writes in the garb of Radha waiting for Krishna to redeem her suffering love."

"Jaisurya" and "Afterwards" explore filial love and expresses the concept of feminism in its best form. "Jaisurya" describes labour of pain and birth of the child: "They raised him/To me then, proud Jaisurya, my son,/Separated from darkness that was mine,/And in me." Here the name of the child has been chosen even before his birth .This is clear proof of the mother's overwhelming love for the unseen child. Putting an adjective "proud" before Jaisuria is like putting a crown on the child's head and imparting him an identity. The woman in her adores the child and forgets her own pains of bearing it. In the poem "Afterwords", she thinks of the child's future in the world and is grieved at the very thought of his suffering.

In her poetry, Kamala Das has always dealt with private humiliations and suffering which are the stock themes of confessional poetry. The crucial factor in all confessional poetry as a matter of expression, has perfected a way of treating the most intimate experience without ever being sentimental or having any trace of pathos. Indian critics have found in her poems the voice of the new liberated Indian woman without realizing that she never speaks on behalf of anybody, but herself. Her frank admissions and bold treatment of private life have nothing exceptional about them and are perfectly in keeping with the nature and themes of confessional poetry. Her repeated references to her Nair heritage of confessional Dravidian skin are part of a persistent attempt to define her identity. As creator of a personal mythology, redefining of one's identity, forms a major concern of the confessional poet.

Kamala Das is concerned with herself as victim. Sexual humiliation becomes a central experience in her auto – biography "My Story" in which he says: "In the orbit of illicit sex, there seemed to be only crudeness and violence." "The Old Play House" is a variation on the same theme: "You dribbled spittle into my mouth, you powered yourself into every nook and cranny , you embalmed / My poor lust with your better – sweet juices ." All her quests for love end in disasters of lust .The sterility and the vacant ecstasy that accompany "The Dance of the Eunuchs" correspond to her own feeling of persecution and inadequacy which lives in her as a continuous state of personal crisis. The image of the body as a prison which recurs in her poems may be traced to this deep existential anxiety that pervades all confessional poetry.

The Confessional Element

Confessional poetry is struggle to relate the private experience with the other world as it is .Such a struggle is the evidence in the poem of Kamala Das from a very early stage . In "An Introduction" she struggles to keep her identity against "the categorizers" who ask her to "fit in" .Having refused to choose a name and a role she feels it necessary to define her identity: "I am saint .I am the beloved and the /Betrayed . I have no joys which are not yours , no/ Aches which are not yours . I too call myself I." The painful assertion , " I too call myself I" , comes from the predicament of the confessional poet .Her experiences are common and ordinary, in fact too common to give her my special identity. But the "I" which experiences them, she insists, is separate and unique. This, to her, is the only way to retain her sense of personal worth in the world of categorizers .She sees the outer world as hostile to the world of the self.

This hostility is given full treatment in her "The Suicide" which , with its title, poetic mood and theme , carries the most vital elements of confessional poetry .Here the conflict is between the world as it is and the personal experience of the poet given in terms of the symbols of the body and the soul .The poem is a monologue addressed to the sea : Since the poet cannot disinherit either the body or the soul and live with one of them , the climax of the poem is reached in the idea of suicide where the agency which can take away one of them is the sea , an old symbol of timelessness . The poet cannot synthesise the inner and the outer, i.e.the soul and the body, and so she thinks of death : "O sea , I am fed up/I want to be simple/I want to be loved/And/If love is not to be had/I want o be dead , just dead." To Kamala Das, death has none of the charms of a mystic experience .She finds death desirable because, for her life is not going to be redeemed , or made new .The escapes she seeks in physical love are also suicides in the sense that, they can affect a temporary merging of the dualities within oneself, In "The Suicide" swimming symbolizes such a temporary resolution of tension.

Confessional poets court death and distintegration, so that a higher level of perception may be possible. They long for death and disintegration as well as for psychic wholeness and insights. This tension

between two opposites is reflected in the constantly shifting moods of confessional poetry .The moods of a confessional poet are diverse and constantly shifting. One of the longer poems of Kamala Das, "Composition", embraces such diverse moods as passionate attachment, agonizing guilt, nauseating disgust and inhuman bitterness. While celebrating her most sublime experiences she becomes aware of the most mundane as its counterpart. She does not attempt to idealize or glorify any part of the self. "The same strategy may be noted in" "Blood", where self-questionings and self-assertions intermingle to form the dominant confessional tone. Images of deep involvement in the physical act of love are followed by those of physical rotting, disgust, and sickness in the poem like "The Old Playhouse", " In Love" and "Gino" .An extreme points is reached in "Loud Posters" where she distrusts the very medium of poetry and laments its artificiality: "I have stretched my two dimensional/Nudity on sheets of weeklies , monthlies/Quarterlies , a sad sacrifice . I have/Put my private voice away adopted the/Typewriter's click as my only speech." A poet who expresses herself in this way has nothing to learn either at the level of craftsmanship or in terms of ideas from others. Such poetry overflows from a bursting experience and the poet's main concern is to achieve a new objective correlative which is not possible theme wise or through a sensibility that engages traditional rhetoric for its expression.

Confessional poetry is all autobiographical; it is rooted in the personal experience of the poetess. T. S. Eliot stressed the impersonality of poetry, but confessional poetry is intensely personal. However, a great confessional poet like Kamala Das, achieves impersonality in another way .From the personal and the particular, she rises to the general and the universal. She transforms her intense personal experience into a general truth. Her own predicament and her own suffering become symbolic of human predicament and human suffering. Here in lies Kamala Das's greatness as an artist. She is both intensely personal and universal.

Kamala Das's poetry contains an acute concern for decay and death. Her autobiography, bordering on fiction occasionally, was actually written during one of her serious illness. It is not that she is afraid of death, and the last portions of My Story tell us that she was sometimes even ready to welcome it, but physical decay and destruction definitely haunt her inescapably. The poem "Lines to a Husband" has two parallel strands in it – obsession with decay and death and obsession with love. The simultaneous pull of these obsessions renders the poetess hopeless and helpless, and in deep anguish she cries out: "From the debris of house wrecks/Pick up my broken face,/Your bride's face,/Changed a little with the years./I shall not remember/The betrayed honeymoon ;/We are both such cynics,/You and I."

In her My Story, Kamala Das tells us that she, at the age of 19, suffered a nervous breakdown as a "neglected wife", and that she was commanded to live all alone in a closed room with sunshine peeping through a window. She fell seriously ill and was removed to Malabar, where her grandmother's affectionate care could cure her. Of all persons, Kamala Das liked her grandmother best whose house was „a paradise on earth for me". In the poem "My Grandmother's House", she remembers this house as a source of great comfort abounding in love for her: "There is a house now her away where once/I received love…/that woman died, /The house withdrew into silence, snakes moved/Among books I was then too young/To read, and, my blood turned cold like the moon/ How often I think of going/There…."

Kamala Das's being a typical poet of city is quite evident from her persistent use of the metaphor of the city for life, such as in the poem "A New City": "I have come with only a picnic bag/To this new city,/To seek a blind date, to shed a snakes do,/In coils and coils, my/Weariness." Kamala Das feels acutely as her new home, coupled with this anguished awareness of her loss is her eloquent expression of the pleasures and charms to be found in a big city. She discovered "all the Delhi streets…fragrant murky", and here she became once more "young, very lovely and delightfully carefree". Elsewhere she contrasts the impressive tranquillity of the Delhi landscape with the disturbed state of her mind. The one city which told heavily on her nerves is Bombay, and yet she bids a touching farewell to it in one of her moving poems: "I take leave of you, fair city, while tears/Hide somewhere in my adult eyes/And sadness is silent as a stone/In the river's unmoving/Core…/It's goodbye, goodbye, goodbye,/To slender shapes behind windowpanes/Shut against indiscriminate desire/And rain..." A separation from anything is ever painful, and the intellectual oneness that Kamala Das might have experienced in this grand city makes her say tearful goodbye to it.

Conclusion

Finally, Kamala Das is a poet of moods and freaks, and hence she writes about so many other things that momentarily arrest her attention; e.g., about pigeons, seasons, children, bangles, the seashore and the morning tree, bats, phone calls, artificial alarums, airports, the ferns and the maggots, the Joss-sticks and the looking glasses, convicts, problems of composition, the high tides and the loud posters, the swamp and the blue bird. These various things have been catalogued here in order to show that Kamala Das does emerge from her well-chosen themes now and then, and thereby create an impression of diversity and variety. She is as felicitous in their handling as in that of her familiar themes. And together, they create the impression on the reader's mind that her poetry is "as honest, it is a human, as she is". The narrowness of her range is thus widened and the monotony caused by frequent reversions to the same subject and mood partly removed.

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