

THE SELF-ALIENATED SOUL IN KAMALA DAS'S POEMS: ITS UPANISHADIC INTERPRETATION

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ABSTRACT

Kamala Das exposes her bruised soul in most of her poems. Her rebellious motif tries to get mental equanimity but social taboos of a male-made society catch her in an unforgiving complexity. The continuous psychological disturbance from her husband, other male partners, and sometimes people around her make her alienated from her Atmic existence. This paper shows that her alienation from Krishna, her estrangement from her Individual Self, and her Alienation from society are close to the Upanishadic Self-Alienation. This paper highlights that in her alienated Soul, she is at the plane of Monomoy Kosh (Mental-causal plane) in which she is in her mental riots and is unable to make up her mind properly. Thus, she finds herself in many identities. This article gives a view that her early life of sensuousness causes her dispassion and creates a world of doubt that the earthly temptation does not quench her thirst for absolute love and Krishna-Consciousness. The conflict between her consciousness and the established principles of society makes her alienated. This paper highlights the different types of Self-Alienation and the influence of The Upanishadic philosophy on her alienated Soul. Finally, her distorted Self gets a journey toward the inner world of deliverance and spirituality.

Keywords: Self-Alienation, Krishna-Consciousness, Mental-Casual Plane, Atmic Existence.

Introduction

Kamala Das exposes her bruised Soul in most of her poems. Her rebellious motif tries to get mental equanimity, but the social taboos of a male-made society catch her in an unforgiving complexity. The continuous psychological disturbance from her husband, other male partners, and sometimes people around her make her alienated from her Atmic existence. This paper shows that her alienation from Krishna, her estrangement from her Individual Self, and her alienation from society are close to the Upanishadic Self-Alienation. She is at the plane of Monomoya Kosh (Mental-causal plane), in which she is in her mental riots and cannot make up her mind properly. Kamala Das is too much subjugated by the principal in a European school in Calcutta, and in familial life by her husband, other male partners. This unethical demeanour of all makes her alienated. This paper shows that her alienated Self is depicted in the light of the Upanishadic philosophy. The Upanishads determine that Self-Alienation has three dimensions like spiritual alienation, existential alienation and psychological alienation.

Spiritual Alienation in her Poems

Spiritual alienation is alienation from God or the Supreme Self (Lord Krishna). As per the functional principles of the five senses, one cannot claim the existence of God because the senses look for bodily existence, but God is beyond physical formation. To the five senses, God cannot be attainable. He (God) is all-pervasive energy, so the limited knowledge of senses is unable to objectify. To experience God, one needs inward movement and absolute surrender cum belief, but the direction of the senses is outward. It clears that the direction of senses and Spirituality is opposite.

Thus, our senses intend to objectify all. Objectification separates us from the union with the Absolute Self. The isolation from the Absolute Self is defined as spiritual alienation. Her spiritual pain is caught in the poem "The Munafique".

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I discover the emptiness
Of a life ill spent,
And the absence of a God
I can truly count on.

(The Munafique)

She opens the meaninglessness of her life. Her tenacity, with the trifle of activities related to earthly and temporal passion, causes her dispassion in her. The fruitless journey of life makes her restless for getting spiritual solace. She reveals that worldly duties are not successful attempts to realize God. At first, she responds to social, traditional beliefs but her poetic sensibility smacked against deep-rooted taboos. Secondly, she turns to the way of God. But her journey is not smooth; rather than she is torn with the experience of the complete vacuum of her heart. This journey is full of toughness because she has spent her life so far in an adverse complexion in which her life is bled with hope and frustration, lust and love, humiliation and wound, and ultimately passion and illusion. She hopes that her desolation can be recovered by spiritual deliverance. She believes that God is an eternal energy, hope, and love source. The blessings of God are unfathomable; no earthly components and time blemish them. Her mental disharmony is due to her conflicted mind attached to all earthly objects. Thus she feels the limitation of physical allurements and cries for God.

Mind is the only cause that brings about man's bondage or liberation. Mind that is tainted with Rajas and Tamas leads to bondage; mind that is filled with Sattva is conducive to liberation.

(Jyotirbindu Upanishad, Mantra- 06)

Spiritual alienation shows the limitation of the body's desire and directs the mind to Spirituality. Spiritual alienation makes her feel that the mind is the ultimate tool to be tainted for spiritual realization. Thus this type of alienation is a sense of appetite for the Atmic realization. If the poet does not experience this alienation, she cannot take the track of dispassion for objectification.

Existential Alienation in her Poems

Existential alienation means estrangement from her Self (Individual Self). This alienation partially relates to external causes but broadly associates with inner weakness. The continuous humiliation in social practices can amplify its impact on one's mind. The incessant suffering, desolation, self-inferiority, and fear are the outcomes of this alienation. A man generally does not make sure of his Self-Existence; he may be a victim of this estrangement. Self-Existence means being fully aware of the state in which he is. Self-Awareness is equivalent to Self-Existence. When fully conscious of his potential, he can withdraw his attention from the rest of the external world, and he will be engrossed in his action and surroundings. Existential alienation cannot be solved by any external advantages and objective facilities. It can be fully controlled by spiritual enhancement. The Upanishadic values predict his journey will be inward when a man quits external merrymaking to enjoy spiritual blessings. Unless mind is not purified by divine qualities like honesty, modesty, and divine love, the mind does not curve to the Core (Atman). As long as the mind cannot identify the same Reality (Atman) within every aspect of life and even everything, Dualism works profusely and drives the mind. Dualism does not make the mind rest to define, refine, and even equalize everything. As a result, the working process of the mind is under vicissitude. The poet Kamala Das's mental condition is under the situation of mental conflict. In the poem "An Introduction", she is in a dilemma because she does not define her real identity. She discovers that she is torn into many identities.

.... I am the sinner
I am a saint, I am the beloved and the
Betrayed...

(An Introduction)

The above lines are constructed in the present tense. It proves that the poet is in utter confusion to realize her state of mind. She feels her ambiguous existence in the present situation. These apparent identities are defined from the light of existential alienation in which mental and sociological causes are responsible equally. When she feels that she is a sinner, her regret for the worthless activities of her past life is highlighted, but when she experiences her unchanging Soul, her Conscience and I-Consciousness give her the immense peace that she has longed for all along her life. When she realizes that her marriage and extramarital life are mixed with the opposite experience of betrayal and love, social taboos

and traditions can be liable for her frustration. So the cause of her mental agony and existential isolation is permeated with the mean traditional flow of society, which creates her dilemma. So, her sense of duality keeps her away from her "Supermind" prescribed by Rishi Aurobindo. According to the Katha Upanishad,

The self-existent Supreme Lord inflicted an injury upon the sense-organs in creating them with outgoing tendencies; therefore a man perceives only outer objects with them, and not the inner Self. But a calm person, wishing for immortality, beholds the inner Self with his eyes closed.

(Katha Upanishad, Part-II, Chapter- I, Mantra- 01, pp. 159)

Due to her outward mind, she is unable to start her journey to the world of "Sat-Chit-Anada Swarupa Brahaman" (Existence-Conscience-bliss) or individual Self. But her mental infliction constitutes the ground of the Spiritual quest for absolute peace.

Psychological Alienation in her Poems

Psychological alienation refers to isolation from her fellow men. It is seen in the poems like 'Nani', "The Dance of Eunuchs", "My Father's Death", and others. Psychological alienation is the effect of existential alienation. When she feels that she loses her inner courage, she becomes isolated from her fellow men and society. According to Kena Upanishad, Inner strength comes from the knowledge of Atman.

Brahman is known when it is realized in every state of mind; for by such Knowledge one attains Immortality. By Atman, one obtains strength; by Knowledge, Immortality.

(Kena Upanishad, Chapter-II, Mantra- 04, pp. 239)

Nani, Eunuchs and the poet herself are socially isolated. In the poem 'Nani', the poet's attitude is philanthropic. Nani is a pregnant maidservant in the poet's family, but she is victimized by the inhuman society, which gives her only pain and suffering instead of recognition and glorification. She is treated as a lifeless puppet to entertain. She is alienated from the common way of life. Being psychologically alienated, she commits suicide. Her suicide is a strong protest against the filthy treatment of society in which so many hapless lives pluck out from the base of life. The poem "The Dance of Eunuchs" is a pathetic poem about eunuchs who are psychologically isolated due to their inability to give birth to a new life. In the poem "My Father's Death", the poet loses her father's supervision and remembers her father's caring and love. Still, ultimately the tone of the poem is ended with a tragic lay as she feels unprotected and insecure. She is now psychologically flooded away. All these characters (Nani, Eunuchs, and the poet herself) mentioned are psychologically alienated due to losing their psychological strength. According to the Upanishads, another cause of psychological alienation is the different degrees of the ego, such as the self-image, the ego ideal, the fantasy self, and the actual dream self. The self-image makes the characters of the poems, as mentioned above, aware of their social justice, and the ego-ideal helps them to look for their success in life, but when the adverse situations of society hinder them in the way of achieving goal, they feel alienated. When all these forms of the ego are transformed into the spiritual self, one is prepared for gaining strength and spiritual liberation. The characters of the poems, 'Nani', "The Dance of Eunuchs", and "My Father's Death" are isolated from their fellowmen. A great psychologist, Eric Fromm displays that a man's attitude towards others relies on his approach towards himself. If a man is estranged from his Atmic power, he will be alienated from others. This psychological alienation occurs in the mind of Nani, Eunuchs, and even the poet herself.

Spiritual Emergence

Her Self-alienation helps to refine her perception of the gross world. She starts her journey to the finer world of knowledge or 'I'-Consciousness. She gradually enters the world of Conscience in which she aspires for pure love or spiritual love that is unconditional and infinite in the poem 'Radha'.

Everything in me
Is melting, even the hardness at the core
O Krishna, I am melting, melting, melting
Nothing remains but
You...

(Radha)

She perceives that total surrender at the lotus feet of God, Krishna can overcome this alienation. Devotion and surrender dissolve her mental conflict and duality. Her love towards Krishna proves her elevation from the physical level to Krishna-Consciousness, in which physical and earthly enticement becomes useless, and her mind travels from finer to the finest level (I-Consciousness). Her mind escapes from the clutch of gross thinking. She discovers that the ground of God is hers, and the ground of hers is the ground of God. Her harmony with God makes the avenue of Spirituality and resolves the anxiety of all kinds of Self-alienation in the end. Thus she says in the poem "Lines Addressed to a Devadasi",

Ultimately there comes a time
When all faces look alike
All voices sound similar.

(Lines Addressed to a Devadasi)

The poet reaches the Atmic level in which she realizes the existence of non-dual Atman in every aspect of nature. Her philosophy changes from external view to inner equality. She understands that the same Atmic power works within everything. Whatever is different to see, is nothing but its manifested form but inner Reality (Self) is the same. This non-duality of the poet is very close to the mantra of Isa Upanishad.

All this, whatever exists in this changing universe, should be covered by the Lord. Protect the Self by renunciation. Lust not after any man's wealth.

(Isha Upanishad, Mantra- 01, pp. 201)

In the concluding part, it is found that she evaluates from overmind to Supermind in which her transcendental Self gets the destination of ultimate peace.

Conclusion

Kamala Das becomes the victim of supreme mental stress, psychological trauma, frustration, and crumpled Self and spiritual alienation. The poet does not ignore performing all the domestic duties. She wants mental equity and a world of liberation and spiritual love. Ultimately her stress and tension get dissolved in 'Krishna-Conscience' and under the feet of 'Allah' when she changes her religion from Hindu to Muslim. Religion is a way to the Absolute Goal (Atmic realization). So, she changes her track but does not leave her goal getting spiritual salvation. In the end, she understands to get absolute peace and deliverance, physical enticement has to be abnegated and she ultimately is successful in her journey of life.

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