



Research Paper

The Influence of the Upanishadic Non-Dualism on Kamala Das's Feminist Emulation

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ABSTRACT: This paper displays a view that the feminist movement constitutes the budding future of society, and there is a certain impact of Kamala Das and the Upanishads on gender equality. Gender biased environment is an annoyance for the well-being of human beings in any sphere of society, like the educational sector, familial world, and economic area. The feminist movement plays a great role in making conscious of the drawbacks of gender inequality. Sexual and gender identity are actually based on biological and social approaches. These approaches no doubt elucidate that there is a difference between males and females, but when the quality of society and the sense of equality between male and female become the primordial issues, the biological and social differences are insignificant to refer to because sexual and social identity cover external look but equality and quality are surely the finest concepts. The mind setup and inner psychic change are needed to define equality and quality. The present paper shows that Upanishadic Non-Dualism takes a vital effect on Kamala Das's feminist approach and consciousness.

KEYWORDS: Gender equality, Atman, non-dualism, linguistic intellectuality, Self-image.

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I. INTRODUCTION

From the dawn of civilization, there was an equal right in every sphere, but after the Upanishadic era, women lost their rights and glorified standard of life. They become subjugated by the wishes of the male-made society. Women do not enjoy their rights in schools, colleges, and even working places. Kamala Das percolates in her poems that she becomes the victim of injustice. The society does not provide her a well-being environment. Her attitude of feminist is coloured by the demand of equality between men and women. Her feminist sensibility is beautifully inspired by the Non-Dualistic attitude of the Upanishads. The Upanishads compose the hidden knowledge of nature under which every creation is controlled. The Upanishads do not confer the difference between male and female. They (The Upanishads) study on the nature of Atman. At the Atmic level, no difference exists. This paper gives a brief account of her psychic change from physical feeling to finest approach that helps her to realize the oneness of men and women.

II. BLACK FEMINIST OUTCRY AND HUMANISTIC ATTITUDE

Black feminism is a new concept of fourth wave of feminism. It is a revolutionary idea to pay respect and rights to black women in society. Generally, it is seen that black women do not consume the same standard of life what white women relish. This abominable treatment determines the destiny of black women in society. Black feminism tries to protest this barbaric practice and to give the background of opportunities.

Due to her black skin, when Kamala Das was at a European School in Calcutta, she was tortured mentally and emotionally. William, a white-coloured boy, fought with her brother. To protest this misbehaviour

from William, the poet attacked with the utmost rage and scratched his face. Even when the visitor came in her school, he got the warmth welcome from the school students. There was a celebration of recitation of poem written by Kamala Das, but her poem was recited by a white-coloured girl named Shirley Temple who got all recognition and acclamation from the Principal and even the visitor. This unwanted behaviour from the Principal deeply moved her and tore her psychological balance immensely. Thus, she longs to be the daughter of the white-coloured parents. Her longing is not a simple desire of a daughter but rather a strong contest against colour division.

I wondered why I was born to Indian parents instead of to a white couple who may have been proud of my verse.

(My Story, pp. 09)

She sketches the outlines of the school environment at Punnayurkulam in a school. Her conduct to classmate exhibits the divine quality of humanity and gender equality. She sat on a bench with a bleary-eyed boy, Velu who suffered from undernourishment. So she collected more than one mango and "more of the curry" for Velu. She sketches the strategy for a school environment in which the students do not feel a sense of anxiety. They share their belongings with a genial temperament. In this circumstance, the teacher is a fountain of knowledge and impartiality. His or her cheerful presence with a smiling face creates an environment of refreshment and recreation. Like Katha Upanishad, the poet wants a fearless environment in which all will be behaved the same by the teacher. Boys and girls should be deemed as the manifestation of Atman. This Atmic knowledge makes it possible to build the idea of equality in the teacher's mind.

Om, May Brahman protect us both! May Brahman bestow upon us both the fruit of Knowledge! May we both obtain the energy to acquire Knowledge! May what we both study reveal the Truth! May we cherish no ill feeling toward each other!

(Katha Upanishad, Invocation, pp. 116)

Gender equality means equal rights for males and females because, at the Atmic level, they are the manifestation of Atman. When the ray of infinite energy illumines, their innovative power and working ability become immeasurable. To raise the endless power of woman, education of equality is the primal principle. Education not only bestows them with a bunch of information but also guides them to develop inner potentiality. The Upanishads announce that the source of energy is 'I'-Consciousness. To deflate the strength of the 'Avi' mantra, the role of a teacher is enormous. His or her democratic attitude develops the mental potency of the poet. The poet, Kamala Das apprehends that the influence of a teacher should be unprejudiced and identical to each of the boys and girls in the school as she becomes the victim of such offensive demeanour of her Principal. She believes that the ethical values of a teacher produce a constructive impact on the student's mental health. Morality and human compassion, that are two abstract qualities of a teacher, can manufacture a successful institution.

III. FEMININE SUFFERING

Her feminist attitude compels her to propagate the true picture of a woman's life under the dominance of a man. The male's dominance breaks her inner serenity. She vehemently desires to embrace death because her life is miserable. Her confession is vivid in the poem "A Request".

When I die
Do not throw

The meat and bones away
But pile them up
And let them tell
By their smell
What life was worth
On this earth
What love was worth
In the end.

Her feminine psyche is vibrated in the above lines. She is tired due to her husband's excessive physical hunger. She tries to find peace in non-physical love that is spiritual or divine love, but her husband has no intention to understand her feeling. Her appeal is to get freedom from the grip of body sense, and she tries to elevate herself to the world of divinity. She does not find any meaning in her life and the love through which she goes. With a fury, she directs her husband to pile her flesh and bone after her death. This outcry exposes her husband's licentious nature in which she is unable to realize the warmth of emotional cum spiritual liveliness. She tries to come out from this coitus game. Her inner Soul cries for the spiritual love and immortal Soul that is beyond change and annihilation like Nachiketa in Katha Upanishad. She discriminates body from unending Soul or Atman. She avoids the body sense as it changes continuously. She aspires to go beyond the body and flesh like Nachiketa.

Both the good and the pleasant present themselves to a man. The calm soul examines them well and discriminates. Yea, he prefers the good to the pleasant; but the fool chooses the pleasant out of greed and avarice.

(Katha Upanishad, Chapter-II, Mantra-04, pp. 131)

IV. ATMIC CONSCIOUSNESS AND EQUALITY

In the later stage of her poetic carrier, the poet's knowledge becomes finer. She becomes more conscious of gender equality from the Atmic level. The Upanishads admit that physical existence is not permanent identity of an individual. Rather, they use more words on Atman that has no sexual difference. From the ground of Atman, equality becomes possible. Like the poet and the Upanishads, human rights insist that men and women are similar. There is no distinction between them. The Indian tradition has shown admiration for a woman as God who is evaluated as half man and half woman, "*ardha-narishwar*". The ancient saint, Manu announces that where a woman is esteemed, God is satisfied; where she is offended, all works become ineffective.

A woman has the same constitutional rights to carry out her goal as a man has. The Upanishadic philosophy constructs the pedestal of feminism by showing that sexual identity does not work for intellectual and spiritual development. The fact is that man and woman are uniformly spiritual and infinite. In all human beings, the same drama of sex, flesh-body, soul finitude, and infinitude is executed. In the Vedic and the Upanishadic eras, a woman achieved the opportunity of initiation and the study of Brahminical comprehension.

In Indian philosophy, like the Upanishads, it is admitted that there is the same force behind all entities. This energy is the foundation of creation, sustainability, and destruction. Our Indian philosophy acknowledges women as the cohort of the owner and the integral part of God. In a widespread and easier sense, she gets the rank of the wife of God, so in ancient life, every 'Incarnation' comes with Shakti or Goddess to convince that God and Goddess are indissoluble wholeness.

He was not at all happy. Therefore a person (even today) is not happy when alone. He desired a mate. He became the size of a man and wife in close embrace. He divided this body into two. From that (division) arose husband and wife. Therefore, as Yajnavalkya said, the body is one half of oneself, like the half of a split pea. Therefore, this space is indeed filled by wife. He was united with her. From that (union) human beings were born.

(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Chapter - 1. Part – IV, Mantra - 3, pp - 115.)

According to the Upanishad, Atman was alone but the single existence was agonizing for Atman, so He created His consort for mental peace and to sustain the chain of generation. This philosophical insight is the crux of creation. Males and females are equally reliant on each other to endow a good-looking society and institutional environment.

In Svetasvatara Upanishad, there is the lucidity of Brahminical energy. Knowledge, animated energy, and dynamism are the different aspects of Atmic power. Kamala Das's matriarchal society and the Upanishadic philosophy both convey completely a balanced foundation of gender in which a woman is the buddy of the Almighty God. When this equality is wrecked, the flow of life and harmony is affected. Freedom and equality are the necessities for women and men. Freedom influences women to fly freely with a specific aim of life that is spiritual salvation.

V. INTELLECTUAL EQUALITY AND THE ASTRAL PLANE

The feminist movement stresses also male bigotry, sexist prejudice, and psychological and even physical mistreatment in society and family. It tries to raise a protest against male authority. The poet displays her struggle to attain English as the medium of her poetic world in the poem, "An Introduction".

English is not your mother-tongue. Why not leave

Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,

Everyone of yours? Why not let me speak in

Any language I like? The language I speak

Becomes mine, its distortions, its queerness

All mine, mine alone. It is half English, half

Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest,

It is as human as I am Indian,

(An Introduction)

The male-made society composes the ideology for not using English as she is a woman. But her upheaval goes against them. It is not the ownership of men. Language helps human beings to expose their thought process as well as their emotion to others. The origin of language carries a strange and wonderful process that works similarly in every human being. There is no dissimilar process carrying out in men and women. Aitareya Upanishad declares the basis of language in human beings. Human being takes food, energy comes from food and energy helps to speak language, so this is the unambiguous arrangement of the source of any language. Human thought process can achieve any language through this method. Though there are a set of rules and laws to learn any language, internal Atmic energy helps all to expand and expose any language. So there is no obstruction to be trained in English for the poet as a woman.

The food so created wished to flee away. He sought to grasp it with speech. But He (the Atman) was not able to grasp it with speech. If, indeed, he had grasped it with speech, one would then have been satisfied by merely uttering (the word) food.

(Aitareya Upanishad, Chapter- 03, Mantra- 03, pp- 26.)

Women are also subjugated in literature. They are compelled to bring under control their feelings and thoughts. In the patriarchal society, males' philosophy is given more magnitude than the perception of woman. Sri Aurobindo, in the great work "The Life Divine", proves quite mystically the existence of The Astral Plane. He shows that this plane is finer than the Gross Level or Physical Plane. When a poet sits for composition, he must be in the Astral Plane. Kamala Das treats her poetic world with different dimensions and approaches. She reaches the Astral Plane in which she experiences a new world of non-physicality. This plane is a gateway of the spiritual layer that she aspires. In this plane, she discovers that there is no physical difference. From this plane, she goes forward for spiritual perfection and humanity. In the physical world, there are a lot of confusion, obstacles, conflicts, stress, tension, and sensuousness. But, in the Astral Plane, the poet overcomes all earthly compassion, tension, and even gender biasness. The Astral Plane spiritualizes her and transforms her philosophy. Thus, she finds that innovation and poetical recreation are not the properties of male dominated society.

VI. GENDER EQUALITY

The poet raises her distrust about gender disparity. She expresses her bitterness against the biological identity and tries to formulate oneness in men and women. She asks men and women the same question irrespectively but gets the same answer.

Who are you, ask each and everyone,
The answer is, it is I, anywhere and,
Everywhere I see him who calls himself
I; ...

(An Introduction)

The poet finds a link from the aspect of the 'I'-Consciousness. Physical identity and social uniqueness are no doubt supportive of establishing one in society. These two identities are not the reality of one as these are the subjects of decay and destruction. These are not liberated from the natural law of annihilation. These are not the everlasting identities of human being. Atman is always eternal and free from natural laws. The reality of human identity lies in his Atmic existence, so anyone says 'I' before his or her name provided by his or her society. Atmic existence creates a connection between man and woman. From the plane of Atman, man and woman are similar; there is no dichotomy or discrepancy. The above lines suggest the speculation of Non-Dualism. It is discerned in the philosophy of the Upanishad.

The Brahman, the God of the Vedanta, has nothing outside of Himself; nothing at all. All indeed is he; He is in the Universe; He is the universe Himself, Thou art the man, Thou art the man, Thou art the woman, Thou art the young man walking in the pride of youth, Thou art the old man tottering in his steps.

(Svetasvatara Upanishad, Chapter: IV, Mantra: 03, pp. 107)

The poet is enthused by the equality of man and woman. She investigates the gender of human souls. It seems to be suspected, but actually it is a credible declaration that she does not come across any biological identity and difference between man and woman in the Atmic level. She opens the doubt on the biological nuance of man and woman in the poem 'The Descendants'.

Is she male who with frail hands
Clasp me to her breast ...
... And is he female who
After love, smoothes out the

Bed-sheets with
Finicky hands and plucks
From pillows strands of hair?

(The Descendants)

Here, 'he' or 'she' signifies to the inner Self that has no genital identity but Atman dwells equally within our physical framework. The poet's consciousness is unambiguous here that Atman is not a physical body. However, Atman is all-pervasive so, He equally underlies in males and females if human beings can outdo all the chaotic knowledge of physical identity.

VII. CONCLUSION

Kamala Das's feminist approach in her poems discloses the hollowness of the social and cultural traditions that are practically produced by the patriarchal society. Her poetry confesses her pain and misery. But, in a close investigation, her voice crosses the boundary of personal experiences, and it gets the status of impersonal and objective standards. Her struggle becomes the protest of all subjugated women. She shows all the way of salvation from this bruised condition. Her feminist emulation tries to constitute the environment of equality. Her feminist consciousness meets with Spiritual Consciousness at the end. Her spiritual emergence shows the source of eternity in which she finds the non-dual identity of man and woman. Her feminist sentiment is tortured by the physical passion of her husband and even other male partners but her quest for pure love gets its final and absolute destination in Krishna Consciousness or 'I'-Consciousness.

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