KAMALA DAS: HER SENSE OF INCOMPLETENESS

“In surrendering to love I am not incomplete like my poems. I surrender completely” (Das, Personal—2).

Incompleteness is a trait associated with most creative personalities. Creation is a continuous process without beginning or end. As Das puts it: “Poets, even the most insignificant of them are different from other people. They cannot close their shop like shop men and return home. Their shop is their mind and as long as they carry it with them they feel the pressures and the torments. A poet’s raw material is not stone or clay; it is her personality” (My Story 157).

Incompleteness is evident in Kamala Das at three levels:

A) as a person
B) as a writer
C) as a painter

A) Das’s realisation of her own incompleteness as a person is put into words in her poem “Feline”:

Another lives in me, I fear, a twin left unborn,
unnamed, unacknowledged, bitter with defeat
and, she with her new-moon eyes stabs my face
and turns me so often, half human
half feline. (Soul 34)

Lacan's theory of psychoanalysis helps us in understanding these lines of Das critically. According to Lacan, when life is created in the womb, there is no gender distinction (Lacan 204-5). The life form is both male and female, total and complete, referred to as "sealed" by Terry Eagleton (166), a period where differences and divisions were not apparent. With birth however, it gets split in two—one part remaining in the womb while the other continues its existence in the visual, outer world. The separation once effected, increases as the child grows. The gap widens, aided by language and the child begins to suffer from a "lack". The creative personality is always aware of this lack and yearns for completeness. The following lines from Das's poem "Composition" have been picked out by Suguna Ramanathan in order to prove a point:

there was off and on a seascape
in my dreams
and the water
sloshing up
and sliding down. (Soul 22)
She points out that these lines surely refer to the bag of waters and the fluid in which the foetus floats in the mother’s womb, the blissful state of non-separation, an androgynous state of uncertainty (23). Literary works since ancient times are replete with examples of situations of this kind, for example, in the novel *Wuthering Heights* written by Charlotte Bronte, the fair and beautiful heroine, Catherine sees the dark and unattractive Heathcliff as being a part of her, though he is merely an orphan brought to her house by her father when he was a child. The feeling of being one with him is so strong that she says, "I am Heathcliff, he's more myself than I am." (82). Throughout the novel she longs to be united with him and her wish is fulfilled only after their death. Another more recent example is seen in Arundhati Roy's *God of Small Things*. Arundhati's own feelings are put into the personality of Rahel, the outgoing girl whose twin Estha is a very shy and quiet boy. The twins are separated at the beginning of the book and they undergo various kinds of suffering heightened by a feeling of insecurity. They finally attain peace by coming together breaking all rules of incest or taboo, at the end of the book. Das in her attempt to achieve androgyny tackles the gender issue very efficiently in her writing. This can be seen as an effort to overcome the "lack" within her. In the poem "The
Doubt" Das reveals the unimportance of gender or the classification into "he" and "she":

When a man is dead, or a woman
we call the corpse not he
Or she but it. Does it
Not mean that we believe
That only the souls have sex

Sex is invisible. (Descendants 16 )

Physical differences of the sexes are evident only insofar as the force of the soul animates the body, without this, the corpse can only be referred to as "it". To conclude that the terms "he" and "she" are attributed to the soul is an attempt to understand the soul in physical terms, to understand the reason for yearning to love, to be loved and to realise that the human love is only a spark of divine. The concluding question in the poem distinguishes the " I " from either sex, being neither "he" nor "she" at the same time both.

Continuing with Lacan's theory, one could say that the existential neurosis is created at birth and made inescapable by language. Hugging it to herself, Das, the loss-inscribed subject wanders in the field of the "other" using a chain of signs that hint at the immensity of the problem
and impossibility of its resolution. The following lines from Das’s “Anamalai Poems” are self-revelatory:

The longest route home is perhaps
the most tortuous, the inward
path you take that carries you step
yes, that deathless
creation tethered to your self,
and constantly struggling to wrest
itself free, tethered to your soul
as your shadow is to your form
your Siamese twin no surgeon
can cut away from you. (Best 157)

B) Incompleteness in Das's writing can be traced to two main factors:

i) A feeling of inadequacy of vocabulary.

ii) Das's feminist qualities, which necessitated the shift to another medium.

i) The feeling that words were not enough for expression set in much later in Das's career, as, in the earlier part of her career, she was
busy with her writing and extremely successful at it too. Das writes of the success in her wonderful poetic style:

They called me a winner, for, with words I did weave a wondrous raiment fit for Gods and with nimble footsteps climbed the stairways of my thoughts finding even the heaven's portals ajar.

("Anamalai Poems", *Best* 155)

Kamala Das is a winner as far as her writing is concerned and not a mediocre one either. Prema Nandakumar notes that Das "burst upon the Indo-Anglian scene like a daring, fascinating spectre of unconventionality blowing to smithereens the traditional reticence of Indian womanhood (384). She is one of the best Indo-Anglian poets India has produced. Her boldness, frankness and her handling of the poetic medium have remained unsurpassed up to this day. Her greatness lies in the fact that she does not write merely as a woman or merely as an Indian but as a human being and this is what earned her universal fame. Das fulfils all the conditions as laid down in a recent American work that examines the manoeuvres a woman writer must go through with herself before she can address an audience. According to it, "a lyric poet must be continually aware of herself from the inside......she must be assertive, authoritative, radiant with powerful feelings while at
the same time absorbed in her own consciousness” (Gilbert and Gubar xxii). In spite of all this Das still experiences an incompleteness in her expression. She had hoped that poetry would be the means by which she could unburden her tortured self, unfolding the mishaps and despairs of her life in order to achieve a state of tranquillity. Initially, poetry did serve as an outlet for her feelings but after a stage it was just not enough for her, in other words, she realised that poetry did not serve her purpose totally. This appears to be the reason why she has taken to painting in recent years, despite the fact that painting is more “cumbersome” as William Carlos Williams, the American painter-poet put it (58). Das’s deteriorating health and failing eyesight have not stopped her from expressing herself in colours. Painting provided her with luxuries not available in the poet’s medium — colour, hue, texture and so on. In Das’s own words: “The brush shows a kind of exuberance because of the colour. Words can’t be so colourful” (Personal—2).

“Poetry itself could constitute a woman’s fulfilment as in the case of Emily Dickinson, it need not be romance alone which can be fulfilling for a woman” is the opinion expressed by John Crowe Ransom (Gilbert and Gubar, Eagleton 175). Obviously it does not apply to Das. In Das’s poetry; there is such an intensity of passion that it renders
words irrelevant for articulation, obviously silence and not words is the true language of love. An example:

When he
And I were one, we were neither
Male nor female. There were no more
Words left all words lay imprisoned
In the aging arms of night. In
Darkness we grew as in the silence
We sang, each note arising out of
Sea, out of wind, out of earth and
Out of each sad night like an ache.

("Convicts", Soul 56)

Dwivedi feels that “Das shows her distaste for the abstract and her preference for the elemental by laying stress in the role of silence as a dramatic device in a poem charged with pulse and power” (124). She cannot say like Yeats “words alone are certain good” or like Ezekiel “the best poets wait for words” (135). Though Das is conscious of the fact that “words grow on me like leaves”, she knows well that they can play their semantic mischief and thus be a nuisance:

... beware of them , they
can be so many things, a
chasm where running feet must pause, to

Look, a sea with paralysing waves

A blast of burning air, or

A knife most willing to cut your best

friend's throat. (Words, Soul 36)

In the poem "Substitute" she suggests that words are a source of discord and harmony. Das says, "I don't believe in writing everything from A to Z. I want to leave certain things unwritten. I want to let the reader participate and fill some spaces with his own thoughts." (Kaur, Poetry 158). Kristeva observes that women's writing exhibit a striking lack of interest in the art of composition. She says that when a woman tries her hand at the architectonics of the word perfected by Mallarme and Joyce, it leads to one of the two things, either it gets bogged down in an artificially imposed structure that smacks of wordplay and crossword puzzles or else—and this seems to be the most interesting—silence, and the unspoken, riddled with repetition weave an evanescent canvas (302). This is perhaps where Blanchot saw the "poverty of language" revealed and articulation is through frugal use of words and elliptical syntax, what Kristeva refers to as "the speech of non-being" (302). Das appears to depend a great deal on silence for creating dramatic effects in her poetry. The dots and ellipses, which she leaves at
the end of sentences, add to the effect, which she creates in her poetry. However, this creates the impression that she does not trust in the power of words as much as she does in that of silence. This stands as a proof for her lack of faith in vocabulary. The following lines from *My Story* serve to strengthen this idea even further. "Be safe in your silence, Mohan, I wrote in his book and envied him, his capacity for silence. With words, I had destroyed my life" (202).

K.S. Suresh's opinions on the nature of the dots and ellipses in Das's work are rather interesting. According to Suresh, Das wrote for woman and her liberation. He sees Das's women as living images of silence. In his opinion, the spaces between words are silences and these become the places where these women live. The spaces force the reader to interpret them; they do not articulate but only indicate, he says. Suresh further adds that, these serve as devices and are used by Das on purpose to force the reader to be involved in the poem. "The Testing of the Sirens" is an apt example where Das has used this device profusely. A few of the lines are given below in order to illustrate the point:

Speaking words of love /in some tender language I do not know...

Ah... doesn't it still show, my night of love?
I'm happy, just being with you. But you.../ you love / another.

On the old cannon-stand, crows bickered over a piece
of lizard-meat and the white sun was there
and everywhere...

shut my eyes but inside my eyelids, there was
no more / light, no more love or peace, only
the white sun burning ,/burning, burning... (Soul 136)

Kamala Das still experiences a twinge of regret for what she feels she
had to sacrifice in exchange for her success. In My Story she says, “I
had used them (words) like swords in what was meant to be a
purification dance, but blood was unwittingly shed” (202). In the poem
“Loud Posters” we have the speaker, in other words the poet herself,
inside out, displaced, recording her desperate career as a pin-up and as
product of typewriters:

I am today a creature turned inside
Out. To spread myself across wide highways
Of your thoughts, stranger, like a loud poster
Was always my desire, but all I
Do is lurk in the shadows of a cul-de-sac,

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

...... I've stretched my two-dimensional

Nudity on sheets of weeklies, monthlies

Quarterlies, a sad sacrifice. I've put

My private voice away, adopted the

Typewriter's click as my only speech; I

Click-Click, Click-Click tiresomely into your

Ears, stranger, though you may have no need of

Me, I go on and on, not knowing why... (Soul 51)

What comes through here is that Das's poetry is the result of
certain compulsions. She is sorry that she had to give up her private
voice. She almost appears tired of writing poetry and feels the
uselessness of her efforts. The sense of betrayal evinced by Das is made
clear in the lines taken from “Smudged Mirrors”:

Thoughts do not seem to jell...

Words turn their backs on me

as strangers do, embarrassed

by the intimacy of a stare.

A bird scratching in the mud

with its flight a mere memory. (Soul 128)
As an ageing poet, Das is all the more conscious of the fact that, for her, words have lost their vigour after prolonged use. Added to this, the taunting by "friends" makes the situation worse.

They tell me, all my friends, that I am finished,
That I can write no more, they tell me
That the goose which laid the golden eggs can lay
No more,... ("Morning at Apollo Pier", Soul 32)

In the poem "The Cart Horse" Das identifies herself with a carthorse, which has carried heavy loads and is in urgent need of rest:

of late
my words have worn
Thin, my speech resembles
The jagged gallop of
A cart horse that needs to
Be reshod and perhaps
Given rest, for, poor thing
The roads were arduous
And its burden always
Too heavy. (Soul 135)
It is a pathetic situation that she finds herself in, but being a fighter she is not the kind who will just give in and the manner in which she makes the shift to painting is extremely praiseworthy.

In the last few lines quoted above Das perhaps refers to the mudslinging that she had to face for being a frank writer and that too, a woman belonging to a traditional orthodox family. She appears to be wary of criticism of this kind. This is probably the reason why she has almost stopped writing poems in English ever since she settled in her native state, Kerala. This brings us closer to another reason for her feeling of incompleteness. When questioned about the reason for not having written poetry in recent times, Das replied, “Actually, there is no one in Kerala who writes poetry in an uninhibited manner. It's just not possible. It's like writing when your parents and grand parents are watching. Their view of you is something different. They see you as something they have created” (Personal).

Once such feelings set in, Das had to find another way to express herself. Painting now offered her the perfect solution, given her increasing inclination towards silence. The fact that she had had art classes at a very early age gave her the confidence for taking up painting on a large scale.
ii) A feminist's lament: The feminist qualities in Kamala Das's writing also necessitated the shift to another medium, besides writing.

It was Julia Kristeva, the noted feminist writer, who discovered that for a woman writer the notion of the signifier, as a network of distinctive marks is insufficient. It is insufficient because each of these marks is charged not only with a discriminating value which is a bearer of signification but also with a drive or an emotional force which does not signify as such that which remains latent in the invocation on the gesture of writing (Eagleton 302-3). She proceeds further suggesting that "the emotional charge so overwhelmed the signifier so as to impregnate it with emotion and thus abolish its neutral status, but being aware of its own existence it does not cross the threshold of signification, or find a sign with which to designate itself" (303). In other words, Kristeva is of the opinion that for a woman writer her emotions far exceed expression. This, I feel is a valid reason for Das's foray into painting.

The world at large believes in two creeds of humanity— the masculine and the non-masculine. The woman has been seen as the "other" the "lesser" and the weaker in contrast to the male who is in every way "superior". This attitude has been established and perpetuated ever since the Middle Ages, starting with the theory of the creation of
woman from the “rib” of Adam. This unfortunate belief has continued to be in existence up to the present day. Women have been forced to believe that their duty lies in staying within the house. They were even denied education and finally when they were allowed to go to school, what resulted was the “immasculation” of woman by man— because what they were taught was all authored by men, their teachers were also men and the woman was forced to accept the male point of view in all areas, even those dealing with woman and her experiences. As Judith Fetterly puts it, woman now became “intellectually male, sexually female in effect, no one, no where, immasculated” (304).

Of late, however, women have started voicing their protests. They proclaim loudly that they are “woman”— precisely what Simone De Beauvoir asserts in *The Second Sex*. They demand respect and understanding of their having a different identity from that of man. Alka Nigam notes, “Women poets have cut loose from male hegemony and seek another more authentic and personal voice. In this they link themselves inextricably to their cultural environment which forms a collective experience, linking women writers to each other across time and space” (100). They ask for a change in the critical technique or aesthetic criteria through which a woman’s writing is filtered, read or decoded. Ellen Morgan renews Woolf’s advice, “Feminist criticism
should, I believe, encourage an art true to woman’s experience and not filtered through a male perspective or constricted to fit male standards” (237). Thus we have the beginning of the genre of feminist criticism which represents the discovery of a voice, a unique and powerful voice capable of cancelling out those other voices so movingly described by Plath in *The Bell Jar* as that “which spoke about us and to us and at us but never for us”.

Das took to writing poetry probably because she felt unloved; a number of incidents in *My Story* stand as testimony to this. It was also her way of revolting against the conventions that oppressed the female and promoted a 'double standard' for free behaviour. She was, perhaps, determined to aim spontaneously for the wholeness of the self and species through her writing. Virginia Woolf has said: “Women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size” (37). She has cited two genuine experiences that a woman writer should go through:

1) the killing of the Angel in the house— the “Angel” was intensely sympathetic, utterly unselfish, immensely charming, she excelled in the difficult arts of family life and sacrificed herself daily—
in short, she had no mind or wish of her own, her purity was her chief beauty and her blushes, her great grave.

2) telling the truth about one's own body (Eagleton 80).

Das was successful in telling the truth about her body as is rightly pointed out by Alka Nigam “Preoccupied with the flesh, she swings from experiencing the body as something sacred and experiencing it also as rotten and filthy. She reveals an exceptional audacity to air the demands of her body”(103) but regarding the killing of the “Angel”, Das's opinion differs—she is not totally averse to the idea of a woman staying at home and looking after the family. She personally feels that for a woman, her husband and family are equally, if not more, important than her career. She says “I've been a good mother to my children. I've done my duties. I didn't neglect them when I turned to poetry, I used to feed them, look after their needs. I didn't dump them on my husband and write poetry” (Personal). It is this contradiction in Das that makes fellow-feminists distrust her and feel that she is not one of them. However, there is no way that Das can be excluded from being a feminist as her poetry represents female voice and not male perspective. Her writing is not an exact representation of her life but they are feminine urges and passion brought out in powerful myths which help
people understand what female experience is— "What it feels like to be one of us" (Millett 2).

As a feminist writer Das is riddled with emotions at the plight of the woman in a patriarchal society. In India where rape, dowry deaths, female infanticide, and various other forms of exploitation are almost everyday happenings, the female consciousness cries out for articulation. Even the birth of a girl child is unwelcome. Lakshmi Kannan’s poem “Women with a Past” is very revealing in its description of the pitiable condition of a female in Indian society. The first few lines are quoted below:

I was born with a past
right from the moment I emerged
dripping with mother’s blood
squealing, my cries mingling with
the moans of the women around
lamenting the birth
of a baby girl
uninvited guest
the arrival of an indiscretion. (Kannan 18)

If one were to analyse the emotions coursing through Das’s writings, anger, rage and rebellion would occupy the foremost positions.
Her articles in magazines are written in a forthright and scathing manner. The very titles of some of these articles such as “I studied all Men”, “Why not more than one Husband”, “What Women Expect out of Marriage and What They Get” indicate a sense of rebellion and a love of freedom unconcerned with the conventional greed for a certificate from this conservative world. Marilyn French has reported in a United Nations sponsored publication “Most Indian women are married young by their families to men they have not met before...They then move to their husband’s parents’ home where they are essentially servants”. Das protests against the essential nature of Hindu domestic life in many of her poems. For example in “The Play house” she bemoans the manner in which “the swallow is tamed” and turned into a “cowering dwarf”. In “Of Calcutta” she traces the degeneration of the protagonist from a free romping child to the despicable canine status of a housewife. Das's rage is also directed towards this society of male prerogatives She rebels at the passive role that woman is forced to play in this traditional society:

Dress in sarees, be girl or be wife,

they cried. Be embroiderer, cook or a quarreler

with servants. Fit in, belong, said the categorizers

(“An Introduction”, Best 12)
The irony and satire that seeps through Das's short stories reflect her bitterness against a society that is cankered at the core. Her woman characters are caught in a man-centred society and like their creator they confront the evils of society and accept their roles in a decrepit world of false values and crumbling ideology. They never forego life, however and fight to sustain themselves. “The Princess of Avanti” could be read as the romantic vision of love that fails to be sustained by a society that can see woman's body as nothing other than a sexual object. Shirley-Geok-lin-lim observes that what comes through in Das’s *My Story* is her opinion that a victimized woman in a patriarchal society is not only physically vulnerable, a prey to rapacious men but also emotionally and spiritually vulnerable (99). This is due to the fact that the victimisation goes beyond the plane of material pain to encompass her mental and spiritual condition endangering her very identity as a woman. Her own body thus becomes the instrument of her torture. This view is also reflected in Das's comments on the nudes she painted. She says: "The body shows what the suffering was like. The body was the cause. If the body wasn't there the suffering too wouldn't have been" (Personal). The protagonist in this autobiographical / fictional work *My Story* chooses writing against suicide, self inscription against self destruction and so takes the first step of revolt against a symbolic
political system that has suppressed her. Das has this to say: "It (My Story) has parts which are creations of my imagination. Whether something happened to me or another woman is immaterial. What really matters is the incident. Probably the victim was too timid, but I'm chronicling the times we live in" (Kaur, Poetry 165).

While Das experiences rage and anger very often at the sad plight of the common woman, there are times when she is overcome by feelings of despair and helplessness. Then it appears as if she feels things are not going to change, she becomes a fellow-sufferer almost defeated by the cruel society and its pretensions. Such a state of mind can be discerned in poems such as "Of Calcutta" where she ruefully depicts her loss of liberty stemming from marriage:

I was sent away to protect family's
Honour, to save a few cowards, to defend some
Abstractions, sent to another city to be
A relative's wife, a hausfrau from his home, and
A mother for his sons, yet another nodding
Doll for his parlour, a walkie-talkie, one to
Warm his bed at night (Collected Poems 59)

Her spirit, essentially feminine is being forced to accept chastisement and she laments:
Where is my soul,

My spirit, where the muted tongue of my desire? (59)

In the poem “The Seashore” Das refers to:

“All those destroying ones who leave you by night”

— for a woman of the third world even unrequited love seems to be the accepted norm—

“...feel the loss of love I never once received”

(Soul 43).

In another poem Das writes that her whole world is roofed by “hostile skies” (“The Stranger and I”, Soul 39) and that the male does not see her with eyes “but with hands” (Qtd. in Daruwalla 13). Poems such as these dramatize an aching disappointment rather than burning rage.

Pessimism is the exception rather than the rule in Das's poetry for she never gives in totally but rallies back to inspire and empower women. Not only in her poetry but also in her essays she comes out as an unofficial spokesman of the Indian counterpart of the women's liberation movement of the West. In the Asian world women writers like Dingling and Das possess the power to enable their readers reread social relations and to participate in a revolution of consciousness which according to Kristeva is absolutely necessary as a precedent for changes
on the materialist/ political scene (Qtd in Geok-Lin lim.88). In the West the feminists claim that women are superior to men but in India woman accepts man as a complementary figure. All she tries to achieve is an identity for herself. In fact in Indian mythology the female is shown as Shakti. “Shiva without Shakti is Shava (cadaver)” says Shankaracharya in Soundaryalahari (54). Das through her writings is able to awaken the passive women and make them realise that their feminity can also be their strength. She urges them to fight social taboos and false values imposed on them in the name of morals. Helene Cixous has remarked on how the long arm of parental-conjugal phallocentrism caused her to be ashamed of her desires and fantastic tumult of her drives (246). Das has fulfilled the wishes of feminist writers such as Cixous who—“wished that woman would write and proclaim this unique empire so that other women, other unacknowledged sovereigns might exclaim: "I too overflow my desires my body knows unheard of songs”(246). Das's greatest triumph as a woman writer lies in the fact that she has been bold enough to speak of her pleasures, she manages to unlock her sexuality that is just as much feminine as masculine. “Exhibition against inhibition”(166) is the name given by Harrex regarding the nature of protest in her work. Phallocentrism has kept woman in the dark about herself, has led her
into self-disdain to the extent of thinking of herself as a monster for having desires and drives. Das has however succeeded in de-phallocentralising the body. In fact in *My Story*, she invites us to see, touch and smell a body made of organs in the collage she has prepared thus reducing the effects (which give rise to differences) to a level of secretions and intestines.

In Das's poetry we have sadness, anger, rebellion, at times despair and hopelessness and above all that, is her unfailing optimism. She is sure that there is light at the end of the tunnel and the condition of woman is bound to change. In order to help she continues writing, strong in her belief in the power of sisterhood. She is a feminist writer and she strives to bring out the "whatness" of woman, but it appears that she is not able to do so through the medium of writing alone. It is perhaps the same as what Luce Irigaray and several other woman writers refer to as woman "otherness" (Braidotti 312) — not merely that which is not yet represented, but rather as that remains "unpresentable" within this scheme of representation (Braidotti 312). This inadequacy of the writer's medium could well be the reason for the gaps seen in Das's writing. Kristeva finds these gaps in women's writing as interesting as the written words. She sees these gaps as being representative of something which the woman writer does not say or cannot say for the
simple reason that for such a writer her emotions are far more in excess of that which can be expressed in words (303). It is not surprising therefore that Das has said: "I paint for the excesses in life. What you cannot bring out in poetry, you must try to bring out in some other way" (People). The need felt by a woman writer for another medium is further substantiated by a theory put forward in an article: "Variations on common themes: New French Feminists on Otherness and Identity" (Eagleton 337-3). According to this theory the literary woman has been on the lookout for another "language" as language itself is supposed to be male as it is a conveyor of, among other things, male chauvinism. They need a language which would be closer to woman's lived experience, a lived experience in the centre of which the body is frequently placed. Hence the watchwords— "liberate-the-body" and "speak-the-body". Das appears to have found her "language" in the medium of painting, thus it becomes legitimate to expose the oppression, the mutilation, the functionalization and the objectification of the female body.

C) Incompleteness as a painter— Kamala Das took to painting seriously only in recent times though she had done an occasional painting in her younger days. It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words and indeed her paintings have a lot to say. An analysis of Das's
painting will be taken up in the fourth chapter. The incompleteness can
however be seen by merely comparing her growth and evolution as a
poet and as a painter. I have chosen to follow the direction her themes
take in order to see the difference. Regarding her evaluation as a poet
we start with her poems dealing with her childhood and then move on to
those belonging to her youth and family life. Besides this, she has also
written a number of poems on social themes and finally there are her
philosophical and spiritual poems. In her paintings too she has worked
on the theme of nostalgia and confession. She has also done paintings
on social themes but she has yet to work on a painting, which can be
classified as philosophical or spiritual. "The Krishna legend
particularly in its account of the God's relationships with the Gopis has
become an important focus in Hinduism for Bhakthi, the experience of
intense religious adoration in which the soul abandons itself in ecstasy
to the Divine." (Jones 203.) Her poems on Lord Krishna are numerous
and a painting on the same theme would prove to be a grand finale.
Das's quick and witty reply to this suggestion made by me was: "I
haven't used the theme yet, but I will. Perhaps a Krishna with greying
hair. That would be lovely" (Personal). Perhaps Das will be able to
overcome the incompleteness as a painter if not as a person or a poet.
Only time will tell.
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