Chapter 6

Conclusion
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Art is considered to be the best medium to express ‘self’ and to join this self with others and poetry is one of such art that provide enough space or dimensions to explore oneself without harming or hurting anybody. Both Kamala Das and Adrienne Rich present their woman characters with impressiveness, great subtlety and without any inhibitions in their poetry.
Using this field of art they reveal themselves layer by layer and develop a deep intimacy with their readers. Their all the women characters whether it is their quest for love or their curious admission of their life or their yearning to be true to themselves vividly find their place in their poems. Their strong advocacy for their identification as an individual and to raise voice for whole women kind for the same of is the main subject matter of their poems. The female persona is determined to get equal rights and wants to breathe in free air: free form the fettered of old fashioned patriarchy system. The old definition of an ideal woman who is trained to follow all the instructions of his man and to lose her identity is denied by their female persona. Kamala Das mocked at this state of a woman in the man dominated society in her poem “A Feminist’s Lament”:

An ideal woman, they said, was but
A masochist. Trained from infancy
To wear the flannels of cowardice
Next to her skin, trained to lie inert
Under a male, committed by vows
To feed her, clothe her and buy for her
The 1000 sq. ft. flat with a loft

For storing the debris of passing years.

I was never that ideal dream. (1)

Nature does not put woman in the lower position it was social pattern designed by man. From the ancient times she is taught to serve and told repeatedly that this is the only goal of her life. They are made captive in the cage that is not even locked. In her poem “Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law” Adrienne Rich states:

Poised, trembling and unsatisfied, before

An unlocked door, that cage of cages,

Tell us, you bird, you tragical machine-

Is this fertilansanue douleur? Pinned down

By love, for you the natural action

Are you edged more keen

To prise the secrets of the vault? Has Nature shown

Her household books to you, daughter-in-law,

That her sons never saw? (2)
In this human society woman is considered a machine to produce new generations and to satisfy the lust of man. Man considers woman just to satisfy his physical hunger while woman seeks love - ideal love that is the combination of three components: intimacy, passion and commitment. Woman talks the language of heart but man only hears the voice of passion. Man only understands the language of sex. In the poem ‘freaks’ Kamala Das speaks about this difference man and woman’s psychology:

He talks, turning a sun-stained
Cheek to me, his mouth, a dark
Cavern, where stalactites of
Uneven teeth gleam, his right
Hand on my knees, while our minds
Are willed to race towards love
But, they only wander, tripping
Idly over puddles of
Desire…(3)
Rich too gets confused about love. She wanders whether love is what she used to dream: a relation of soul or what she is experiencing. She states in her poem ‘Phantasia for Elvira Shatayev’:

*In the diary torn from my finger I had written*

*What does love mean*

*What does it mean “to survive”*

*A cable of blue fire ropes our bodies*

*Burning together in the snow. We will not live*

*To settle for less we have dreamt of this*

*All of our lives. (4)*

When the quest of love is not quenched in marital relation, they were impelled to wander in search of it. Social norms or cultural values could not confined them into the four wall of their house. Das tells in her poems, “Substitute”

*After that love became a swivel door*

*When one went out, another come in....(5)*
Here love is compared with a swivel door that received frequent opening and closing from one who enters it. Similarly love in Kamala Das’s life receives frequent change of lovers. This pattern is not accepted by Indian society. In India people does not raise any question when a man develops relation outside marriage but it is a heinous crime if a woman has anykind of intimacy with a man other than her husband. Kamala Das challenges this social system which has duality in it. She falls in love with other men and frankly accepts it.

Adrienne rich belongs to America where social value and culture is far different as of India. She does not seek ideal love, neither nuptial knot is not considered as a bond seven lives. She wants space to grow and mental peace. Her experience about her marital life made her revolutionary. She took a step that is not accepted by any society of the world. She completely denies any dependency on her female counterpart. She even does not appreciate dependency of woman on man for physical love. To fulfill her physical need, she looks at other woman. She turns to a lesbian and enjoys physical intimacy with her female partner. It is blow for any human society. She did not even
hesitate to accept it. She confesses in her poem ‘The Phenomenology of Anger’

\[ \text{The only real love I have ever felt} \]
\[ \text{Was for children and other women} \]
\[ \text{Everything else was only lust, pity...} \]
\[ \text{This is a woman’s confession.}(6) \]

This outwardly frank confession is another important aspect of feminist poets like Adrienne Rich and Kamala Das. They boldly present themselves in the poetry. After several sexual interactions with many men, Kamala Das disillusioned. She started getting baffled and gave the name of love to her lust. Das soon fed up of this so called love which is limited to skin deeps. Soon she comes out of her illusion and in strong aversion she asks in her poem ‘Conviets’

\[ \ldots \ldots \text{What is} \]
The use, what is the bloody use?

That was the only kind of love

This hacking at each other’s parts

Like convicts hacking, breaking clods (7)

Failure in getting ideal love develops a kind of detachment in Kamala Das. She realized that neither her lovers nor her husband can ever established a rapport with her soul. Their approach is only limited to her body. In her poem ‘Gino’ she tells:

Love I no longer need

With tenderness, I am most content

I have learnt that friendship

Cannot endure

That blood ties do not satisfy. (8)

Though she feels content but this realization grew from negativity and the result of such can not be positive. Rich’s reaction is more or less similar with Das. She expresses in her poem ‘Phantasia For Elvira Shatayev’:
But I can’t call it life until we start to move

Beyond this secret circle of fire

Where our bodies are giant shadow flung on wall

Where the night becomes our inner darkness and sleeps

Like a dumb beast head on her paws in the corner

Thinking of a lover, their blind faith

Their crucifixions

My envy is not simple I have dreamt

Of going to bed. (9)

This detachment and frustration in man- woman relationship lead her to plunge into woman- woman relationship. She enjoys and advocates the lesbian relationship. In ‘Twenty One Love poems XII’ she very openly states it:

And the post echoing through our blood dreams

Is freighted with different language, different meanings

Through in any chronicle of the world we share

It could be written with new meaning
We were two lovers of one gender

We were two women of one generation. (10)

To accept this truth in front of everyone is really a bold step and this could be done only by the feminist poets like Adrienne Rich and Kamala Das. Their poetry is poetry of self-revelation. They reveal their deepest thoughts, repressed anguish and strong feelings in verse form. They express such painful feelings that most of the people suppress. Their poetry affects the psychology of their readers and it has a revolutionary impulse in it. Their poetry probe deep into the psyche of their readers and impels them to react if they too are in same situation. By nature women are less reactive and believed in sacrifice and serve. But they too are individual and have some expectations and goal for their life. Poetry of these poets ignites the minds of passive woman readers to stand for equality, to come out from their monotonous routine. Though at first glance it looks like that the subject matter of their poetry is personal, their own experience but thorough study shows that it has universal appeal. They are representing whole community of women. They are the mouth piece for women and struggle for woman’s right of equality. Both Kamala Das and Adrienne Rich speak on behalf of women. Kamala Das talks about social equality and freedom for women.
Adrienne Rich along with social justice and equality speaks for political right and constitutional rights. Political flavor is missing in the poetry of Kamala Das.

Feminist poetry is also marked with autobiographical element. A study of Rich’s poetry throws a light on some episodes of her life which keeps on haunting her. Though they are not many and do not tell much about her life but whatever is mentioned is the basic and important part of her life. Poem ‘Grandmother’ tells about her both maternal and paternal grandmother their nature, their suffering at old age and their role in her life. Poetry ‘After Dark’ and ‘Sources’ tells her relationship with his father, his loving and dominating nature and her grief over his death. Poem ‘Sibling Mysteries’ tells about her childhood days with her sister, her mother’s preference to her father than to her children. ‘From a Survivor’ is a poem written two years after the death of her husband where she laments the fact that he could not recover from their separation, although she had frankly confessed her lesbianism to him and they had talked about their new life. In another poem ‘Sources’ she addresses her husband talking about other possibilities to survive. In her poem ‘Mother-in- Law’ she tries to talk and resolve their differences. She
requests her to give a new start to their relationship. She sympathizes her on the loss of her son.

In kamala Das’s poem we get more references of her life than Adrienne Rich. We can tell that her poetry is record book of her life where almost all important incidents and persons are recorded. Poem ‘Introduction’ gives us the information that she was born in Malabar, she can speak three languages and her husband was sixteen years old when she got married. In the poem ‘Too Late For Making Up’ She mourns on death of her father and expresses her love for him which she could not express when he was alive. From the poem ‘Old Cattle’ we get to know that she was hospitalized for two weeks because of heart attack. In her Poem ‘To a Big Brother’ she recalls her childhood days spent with her brother enjoying little things like making castle, rowing paper boats etc. Her poems have abundant autobiographical facts woven in words. This autobiographical expression makes reader familiar with writer and develops connectivity between them. It bridges the gulf between them and they believes that the poet is one of them and has same sorrow and joy what they feel. They are not far or distinct but one of them.
Adrienne Rich and Kamala Das endeavor to put their personality in poetic colours. Subjectivity, autobiographical elements and confessional mode seems to be result of efforts to express the self in their poetry. Their poems represent not only themselves but also every woman who has somehow or the other faced the challenges of survival in man’s world, but is not getting any way out of it. Neither they are courageous enough to share it with anybody who could show them way to freedom. Poetry for them is not only an expression of their disturbed mind, but also a sort of aesthetic and cathartic process in which pains and sufferings of their personal life are transformed into a healing balm for them as well as for whole woman community.
References:


10. Adrienne Rich: Dream of Common Language, op-cit