

The 'I'-Consciousness of the Upanishadic Values in Kamala Das's Selected Poems

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Abstract: It is a general notion that Kamala Das is a poet of confession. She confesses her frustration with physical love and also with social taboos and traditions. Her despondency in her personal life gets a radical change to move forward to the Ultimate Reality. She realizes that gross and sensuous feelings do not permit her to provide absolute happiness that is her prominent aspiration in her life. She desires to transcend her physical identity and sorrow. The present research paper tries to investigate that the 'I'-Consciousness of the Upanishads felt in her poems helps her to transcend and to reach the way of absolute salvation from physical limitation. The 'I'-Consciousness is a mystical power and subtle judgement which helps her to discriminate between finer and gross things, temporal and permanent, and ultimately physical body and the Soul residing in human body.

Key Words: 'I'-Consciousness or Krishna Consciousness, the Physical Plane, 'I'-Thought, flesh-body, Grossness, subtlety.

Introduction:

The Upanishads demand that man is potentially divine. He or she carries the immortality of Atman. The existence of Atman is felt by an individual through his or her Consciousness. The 'I'-Consciousness is the reality of an individual. It brings one from any worldly misery and bondage and ultimately uplifts to the way of subtlety. The present research paper attempts to find out how the 'I'-Consciousness works in her poems and ultimately makes her spiritualized. This paper ejaculates a complete journey from sensuous titillation to spiritual transformation. Gradually she gets redemption from sensuous pleasure. When she feels exhausted within the

temporary repose, she ransacks the source of perpetuity. Ultimately her spiritual upgradation eternizes her desire for mental equity. So, this paper shows a graphical development of her spiritual deliverance.

Deliverance of Dilemma:

After 1980s, feminist writings with spirituality get a fresh commitment. Kamala Das is one of the pioneers concerning spiritualism. Kamala Das's poems explore her spiritual transformation from the gross level (The Physical Plane). She associates with the extra-marital relationship but her aspiration remains same to realize her inner self, the 'I'-Consciousness. But at the first stage, naturally the poet is at the Physical Plane. In this plane, the 'I'-Consciousness is blended with egoism. Egoism is associated with gross objects and is a link between the body and Pure Consciousness (Self). Egoism is the 'I'-Thought. In this level, the mind becomes the victim of delusion and finds several identities. So the poet, at this stage, sees herself in different 'I's in the poem "An Introduction".

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

(An Introduction)

The above lines percolate her physical distortion from her husband and also other male partners. Her mental disharmony compels her to represent herself as contradictory identities side by side. Duality is the result of her mental disequilibrium. Within this contradiction, there is also a great spark of Consciousness that she realizes the shortcomings of carnal desire and sensuous love. The 'I'-Consciousness causes a spark of realization on the dilemma of mind. Her mind gradually sublimates and takes a rest in the Pure Consciousness, so the poet asserts in the same poem.

... I have no joys which are not yours, no
Aches which are not yours. I too call myself I.

(An Introduction)

Here the possessive pronoun 'yours' stands for women. The poet's own suffering is mixed with the pain of all women in society. Her consciousness makes her well aware of the women's position in a male-made society. Women are ill-treated in society and even in a family.

Pure Consciousness helps her to create a link among women's unspoken heart-penetrating experience. She plays a role to exhibit women's boisterousness. The suffering of women and the poet brings them one stand point. So the poet dispels her adversity and ties herself to the pain of every woman. As they are the victims of subjugation in society, they tie themselves with each other. Their physical difference is transgressed and become one oppressed entity. The poet feels her experience is equal to all so her pain gets universal appeal and the 'I'-Consciousness. Her earlier association with physical love and successive depression present her temporal titillation and tormenting aspect of worldly life. The deleterious nature of worldly sensations awakens the sense of dispassion in the mind of the poet. So she confidently says "I too call myself I". Here the 'I'-Consciousness is devoid of egoism as the 'I'-thought is annihilated absolutely, so she finds oneness and singularity among other women's identities.

The Sense of Monism in Gender Biasness:

Her consciousness inspires her to carry women from their limited area of the familial world for giving them the world of salvation. Thus she wants to establish commonness between man and woman in the poem, "An Introduction".

... who are you, I ask each and everyone,
The answer is, it is I. Anywhere and
Everywhere, I see the one who calls himself
I; ...

The 'I'-Consciousness pulls her to question about the identity of all irrespective of men and women. She finds oneness within all. She does not discover any difference among all. Her mind is liberated and free from physical bondage and is lighted with Pure Consciousness. The strange and pristine beauty of Consciousness lies in the discovery of singularity. In Pure Consciousness, plurality is never experienced. The 'I'-Consciousness is a superb brilliance that illuminates the mind to feel the subtlety of every physical existence. Thus, the poet experiences a sense of 'I'-Existence within everyone from the viewpoint of mental subtlety. Her delusion is completely dispelled. At the very stage, her mind travels much, so to find out the reality of everyone's identity, she asks the same question to all, she gets the common answer of 'I' from everyone. She realizes that the body is a hindrance to actualizing singularity within plurality. The

body is a gross product and insentient, when Consciousness illuminates the mind to reflect, her body-sense is completely gone. She perceives the 'I'-Existence within every flesh-body. Her consciousness is enmeshed with nonphysical, unaffected, and self-luminous Atman.

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 Realization of Deleterious Effect on the Body:

Her Pure Consciousness elevates her mind to discover the deleteriousness of body and bodily temptation. She aspires to get freedom by upgrading herself from a physical bond to spiritual salvation in the poem, 'Composition'.

To e frank,
I have failed.
I feel my age and my
Uselessness.

She moves forward for spiritual pursuit. Her spiritual hunger impels her for salvation in the poem, 'Composition'.

I must linger on,
Trapped in immortality,
My only freedom being
The freedom to
Discompose.

Her Consciousness presents the limitation of the gross body. Her physical desires start to dissolve by her subtlety of knowledge. Her mind is purely prepared to execute the finest power of discrimination between tempted objectification and spiritual orientation. She evaluates physical enticement as a barrier to get spiritual redemption. So her bodily decomposition makes her prepared for spiritual salvation. Her mind is beautifully refined and impelled by the 'I'-Consciousness that her inner sublimation determines her thought and proposition. Her inner

expansion moves her to experience the ever-changing nature of body and inconsequential nature of body pleasure. To understand the trifle nature of her body, she becomes introspective. Her introspection is helpful for perceiving the immensity and infinitude of spirituality.

Her consciousness carries her beyond the barrier of physical existence. She apprehends that the body is as true as the Soul but the body is inert and a matter of decay and destruction. She does not fully deny the reality of body but her inclination changes from body to subtle mind and ultimately Supreme Bliss. Her realization of subtlety beyond the body is felt in the poem “The Suicide”.

Bereft of soul
My body shall be bare
Bereft of body
My soul shall be bare
.....
I throw the bodies out,

(The Suicide)

The body is a structure to carry subtle dimensions like the mind, consciousness, and ultimately the Soul. It does not create an obstacle for the mind to work and for consciousness to realize rather than bodily discomfort reminds the poet of the shortcomings of body pleasure, so the body helps her to comprehend the relevance of liberation from physique. She asserts the purity of the Soul. Her realization goes finer and she is fully convinced that if body is not tues, the Soul or ‘I’-Consciousness will be beyond realization. The body sense or ‘I’-Thought causes miser and melancholy because the body binds her in limited feelings of five senses but her hunger is for the Infinite Soul. She understands that when body sense is gone fully, the ‘I’-Consciousness permeates the mind. The ‘I’-Consciousness makes her feel that she is not merely a body, her reality is Atman or the Supreme Soul. The Supreme Soul certainly resides in the insentient body that is under the control of the natural law of change and destruction but the Soul is unaffected and unchanged. Spiritual realization is a type of Conscience in which the poet discovers the bondage-free Soul.

The Absolute Submission:

Her consciousness makes the way of realization. She feels the significance of absolute surrender to the lotus feet of Lord Krishna in the poem, 'Radha'.

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

The poet exposes her favour of the character of Radha. She desires to be Radha as she nurtures her dream to reach the abode of Lord Krishna. Radha is an embodiment of surrender to the feet of Lord Krishna. Total surrender refers to unquestioning devotion in which the devotee has no personal choice and desire. He is totally lost in devotion and perceives unification with the Absolute Soul. Her consciousness is transformed into "Krishna Consciousness". Her individual entity is melting to be part of Lord Krishna. She conveys that in the spiritual liberation devotion has immense importance.

Devotion dissolves her physical barrier to reach the world of subtle Consciousness. Desires, sense-gratification and carnality are washed in the tears of devotion. She becomes purified and is prepared for the entry of Krishna Conscience. Body feeling does not work. Grossness is evaporated and vanished and in the place of grossness, a sense of subtlety makes her feeling spiritualized. She finds that she not only ties with Lord Krishna but also becomes Lord Krishna. In the plane of 'I'-Consciousness, one realizes that one's ground of reality is not different from the Absolute Reality (Atman). This type of comprehension happens in the case of the poet. So her absorption with Lord Krishna reflects her spiritual liberation.

The Realization of the Shortcomings of Ritual based Religions:

Her consciousness certainly finds out clumsiness in the religious customs and beliefs. She wants spiritual salvation so she thinks her aspiration is not for any religious rituals but rather for God's realization. She clears her attitude to religious dogmas in the conversation with Eunice de Souza.

I've moved away from temples and religions. No edifice can contain God. Religions have an expiry date. If you move away from religion, you go closer to God. The myths are like costumes. You don't need them. Religion is not relevant.

(Conversation with Kamala Das, pp. 27)

Her conscience inspires to think that religions are full of rituals. When religions are confined in customs avoiding their spiritual essence, they lead one to the zone of ignorance and worldly bondage.

Verily, those worlds of the demons are enveloped in blind darkness; and thereto they all repair after deaths who are slayers of Atman.

(Isa Upanishad, Mantra: III, pp. 203)

Her change of religion from Hinduism to Muslim does not hamper her real ambition of spiritual redemption. Her love to Lord Krishna and Allah is the pursuance of spirituality. She changes her track to reach the Ultimate Goal (Atman). She leaves one way but she does not quit her goal. Religion refers to the science of values and customs. Simply it covers the way of spirituality but spirituality simulates one to find one's true Self-Identity or 'I'-Consciousness. The poet wants spiritual salvation to which rituals-based religion is insignificant. Her former religion does not suit for her ultimate motif but she sticks to her devotion for the Supreme Soul. Her spiritual submission is percolated in the poem, "Ya Mohammed".

We prepare for you
The banquets of love
You came like the raindrops
On the desert, ...

(Ya Mohammed)

Like her previous submission to Lord Krishna, she is in search of the Ultimate pleasure under the influence of Allah. He comes with an endless shower of pure love that gives her mortal pain and worldly melancholy. Her acceptance is clear about the spiritual deliverance that total submission can pave to the world of spirituality and ultimate peace. The act of her devotion decreases her ego and makes her egoless. Thus, she continuously steps forward for the world of spirituality. Spirituality is not only the assertion of Self-Enquiry but also a total continence from

the earthly objects. The salvation from worldly tenacities opens the opportunity to absorb the spiritual love for God or Allah.

Conclusion:

The Upanishads determine that Self-Realization is the 'I'-Consciousness. The salvation from egoism paves the path of Self-Realization. It is a great barrier to spiritual liberation and Consciousness. The destruction of the 'I'-Thought is liberation. The 'I'-Consciousness is a supreme kind of level in which egoism is dissolved and objective association is degenerated. According to the Upanishadic values, the 'I'-Consciousness connects with the gross body and sensuous pleasure at the Physical Plane due to the physical attachment.

But this Supreme Consciousness creates a spark of Self-Realization because the nature of physicality and grossness is deleterious and transient. The continuous attachment for temporal grossness causes misery and unhappiness, so the 'I'-Consciousness drives the mind to the path of Ultimate Reality. Her spiritual awakening makes her aware of the limitation of the physical pleasure. Her 'I'-Consciousness drives her mind inward and discovers the existence of divinity within all.

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