

Awakening the Self: The Role of Upanishadic Consciousness in Kamala Das's Self-Awareness

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the profound influence of Upanishadic consciousness on the self-awareness of Indian poet and author Kamala Das. Through an analysis of her autobiographical writings and poetry, we examine how the philosophical principles found in the Upanishads shape her understanding of identity, femininity, and the human experience. The study highlights the interplay between traditional Indian spirituality and modern existential concerns in Das's work, revealing how her engagement with Upanishadic thought fosters a deeper exploration of selfhood and personal truth. Ultimately, this exploration contributes to a broader understanding of the synthesis of spirituality and literature in contemporary Indian discourse.

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

I. INTRODUCTION

Kamala Das, one of India's most celebrated poets and writers, is renowned for her candid exploration of identity, love, and femininity. Her works often reflect the tensions between societal expectations and personal desires, a duality that resonates with the complexities of the human experience. Central to her literary exploration is the concept of self-awareness, which she articulates through a lens deeply influenced by Indian philosophy, particularly the teachings of the Upanishads. The Upanishads, ancient texts that form the philosophical foundation of Hinduism, delve into the nature of reality, the self (Atman), and the ultimate truth (Brahman), offering profound insights into the essence of consciousness and existence.

This study aims to investigate how Upanishadic consciousness informs and shapes Kamala Das's understanding of self-awareness. By examining her autobiographical narratives and poetry, we will uncover the ways in which her engagement with these philosophical concepts provides a framework for her introspection and self-exploration. Das's writings reflect a continuous dialogue between the spiritual and the personal, illustrating how the Upanishads guide her journey toward self-realization and authenticity.

The relevance of Upanishadic philosophy in contemporary literature cannot be overstated. In an era marked by rapid globalization and cultural shifts, Das's work stands as a testament to the enduring impact of traditional Indian thought on modern existential queries. Her poetry and prose not only challenge societal norms but also invite readers to contemplate their own identities and inner truths. By synthesizing the ancient wisdom of the Upanishads with her personal experiences, Das creates a rich tapestry that reveals the intricate layers of human consciousness.

The subsequent sections of this study will provide a comprehensive analysis of the philosophical themes present in Das's writings, focusing on how they resonate with Upanishadic teachings. Through this exploration, we aim to highlight the significance of spirituality in shaping self-awareness and personal identity in Kamala Das's literary oeuvre, contributing to a deeper understanding of the interplay between tradition and modernity in Indian literature.

II. BLACK FEMINIST OUTCRY AND HUMANISTIC ATTITUDE

Dark woman's rights is another idea of fourth rush of women's liberation. It is a progressive plan to offer appreciation and freedoms to people of color in the public eye. For the most part, it is seen that people of color don't consume similar norm of life what white ladies relish. This accursed treatment decides the predetermination of people of color in the public arena. Dark woman's rights attempts to fight this primitive practice and to offer the foundation of chances.

Because of her dark skin, when Kamala Das was at an European School in Calcutta, she was tormented intellectually and inwardly. William, a white-hued kid, battled with her sibling. To fight this trouble making from William, the writer went after with the greatest amount of fury and scratched his face. In any event, when the guest came in her school, he got the glow welcome from the school understudies. There was a festival of recitation of sonnet composed by Kamala Das, however her sonnet was discussed by a white-shaded young lady named Shirley Sanctuary who gained all appreciation and praise from the Head and, surprisingly, the guest. This undesirable way of behaving from the Chief profoundly moved her and tore her mental equilibrium tremendously. Subsequently, she yearns to be the girl of the white-hued guardians. Her yearning is certainly not a basic longing of a girl yet rather a solid challenge against variety division

I asked why I was brought into the world to Indian guardians rather than to a white couple who might have been glad for my refrain. (My Story, pp. 09)

She draws the layouts of the school climate at Punnayurkulam in a school. Her direct to colleague shows the heavenly nature of humankind and orientation uniformity. She sat on a seat with a blurred peered toward kid, Velu who experienced undernourishment. So she

gathered more than one mango and "a greater amount of the curry" for Velu. She portrays the technique for a school climate wherein the understudies don't feel a feeling of uneasiness. They share their possessions with a friendly disposition. In this situation, the educator is a wellspring of information and unbiasedness. Their merry presence with a grinning face establishes a climate of reward and diversion. Like Katha Upanishad, the writer needs a valiant climate in which all will be acted a similar by the educator. Young men and young ladies ought to be considered as the indication of Atman. This Atmic information makes it conceivable to assemble the possibility of fairness in the educator's psyche.

Om, May Brahman safeguard us both! May Brahman present to us both the product of Information! May we both get the energy to obtain Information! May what we both review uncover Reality! May we love no evil inclination toward one another! (Katha Upanishad, Summon, pp. 116)

Orientation balance implies equivalent freedoms for guys and females in light of the fact that, at the Atmic level, they are the appearance of Atman. At the point when the beam of endless energy lights up, their creative power and working skill become immense. To raise the interminable force of lady, schooling of fairness is the basic rule. Instruction not just gives them with a lot of data yet additionally directs them to foster internal probability. The Upanishads report that the wellspring of energy is 'I'-Awareness. To flatten the strength of the 'Avi' mantra, the job of an educator is gigantic. Their popularity based demeanor fosters the psychological power of the artist. The writer, Kamala Das secures that the impact of an educator ought to be fair and indistinguishable from each of the young men and young ladies in the school as she turns into the casualty of such hostile disposition of her Head. She accepts that the moral upsides of an educator produce a

useful effect on the understudy's emotional wellness. Profound quality and human empathy, that are two theoretical characteristics of an educator, can produce an effective establishment.

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.)

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 beings take 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 NonDualism. 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.

CONCLUSION

The feminist stance taken by Kamala Das in her poetry reveals the fallacy of the cultural and social customs that are essentially created by the patriarchal society. Her anguish and suffering are shown in her poems. But upon closer examination, her voice transcends the realm of personal experiences and is given the character of objective, impersonal norms. Her fight turns into a protest by all oppressed women. She demonstrates every path to recovery from this injured state. Her feminist imitation attempts to create an atmosphere of equality. At the end, her spiritual awareness and feminist consciousness collide. Her spiritual development reveals the eternal wellspring where she discovers the non-dual identities of man and woman. The physical desire of her spouse and even other male lovers torments her feminist sensibility, but Krishna Consciousness, also known as "I"-Consciousness, is the ultimate and definitive endpoint of her search for pure love.

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