

## THEME OF DEATH IN SYLVIA PLATH AND KAMALADAS POETRY

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### Abstract

Death is the common theme where both Sylvia plath and kamala Das meet through in their own different ways. Life is mere dream and that death is the only reality. They have used theme of death as a subject of their poetry. In the present paper an attempt has made to focus on the theme of death as a subject in the poetry of Sylvia plath and kamala Das.

**Key words:** confessional ,ineffectual, bliss , eloquent, whirlpool,

Life is a mere dream and that death is the only reality. It is endless, stretching before and beyond our human existence. To slide into it will be to pick up a new significance. life has been despite all emotional involvements as ineffectual as writing on moving water. The question of death is as old as the question of life is. This question of death evokes a mixed feeling of pity , fear and a wonder whether the person could have solved the problem in any other rational manner . To take death as a challenge and to have many encounters with it as the confessional writers do is something remarkable and incredible. The confessional poets are distinct in their welcoming of death and dissolution. This is so that they may achieve a higher level of perception. Their desire is mostly reflected in the extremely volatile mood of the confessional poetry.( 1)

Death is the common theme where both Sylvia plath and kamaladas meet through in their own different ways. Sylvia plath , in her poems has sketched death in many colours without sounding morbid or cynical she talks in a very casual tone as if death is another friend of her's and extends her hand of friendship. For her, dying is not a painful end, but an art. Dying is an art, like everything else I do it exceptionally well she confesses: Sylvia plath as a child was introduced to death as an experience in a rude practical way when she lost her father .her mother did not wish that she should see the dead body. Sylvia plath's experiments with death began right at this stage. All her biographer's mention about her first attempt to kill herself at the age of ten, but not much light has been thrown on the incident. It is conspicuously omitted by her mother too. Where as the second attempt is described with all emotions by her. Sylvia plath herself mentions about it in her poem 'LADY LAZARUS'. She might have done it with childish inquisitiveness, or she might be too young to articulate the intensity behind the experience. It was the second experience intrigued the many critics. She was a bright cheerful, ambitious girl and successful in every apparent way with good academic background.

Sylvia plath has her own reasons to offer at poetic level regarding her interest in the aspect of death. She has used love, death and poetry all these terms as synonyms. Many of her

love poems echo death and poems with death as the central theme can be interpreted as love poem too it can therefore be said that she was in love with death. She viewed death, sometimes as an instrument to meet her dead father, sometimes to return to the womb with a hope of rebirth (2) In 'FEVER 1030' she burns with rage to become pure. It is observed about this poem is about two kinds, of fire and fires of hell, which merely agonizes and the fires of heaven which purify. During the poem, the first sort of fire suffers itself into the the second (II). She explains how she wants to become pure.

I am too pure to you or anyone your body,  
 hurts me as the world hurts God.  
 Am a pure acetylene virgin  
 Attended by roses,  
 By kisses, by cherubim,  
 By whatever there pink things mean,  
 Not you nor him ( 3)  
 Sex becomes repulsive and other morbid images.  
 Like cut start exciting her what a thrill  
 My thumb instead of an onion  
 The top quite gone.  
 Except for a sort of an inch ( 4)

The thumb appears like a little pilgrim and she enjoys the thin papery feeling and welcomes death with 'carpet rolls straight from the heart. Explaining the philosophy of death and rebirth in kamaladas poetry it would be better to quote the famous Raj Kappor song from film joker "jeena yaha marana yaha iskee siva jaana kaha " which gives the theme Indian mythology that one has to face everything in this life on this earth only.

The death holds no mystical charms for kamaladas. She finds the idea of death attractive as she feels that there is nothing new happening in her life, and there is nothing to redeem in it. The respite that she looks for in physical relationships is also suicide in a sense. They effect the merging of the duality within her. The act of swimming in the poem is symbolic of a resolution, though temporary of the conflict. Kamala das presents the theme of death in a different way. In her story "the smell of a bird" from the collection of short stories "the scandal trees" (1995) .she narrates how this death is unavoidable truth in every ones life . the protagonist goes in search of a job, she reaches the premises of the office building where interview is scheduled . she enters into the complex and was stunned at the name of the board (dying) entering the room she finds a strong-armed young man drinking he explains that he has been appointed there to offer an easy death to the visitors. He says that he knows her very well and she too saw him when she was laying on hospital bed. When everything seems yellow to her. He adds that the protagonist is eagerly waiting for him . she pleads him to let her go back . the man ignores her repeated pleadings and tells her about a yellowish grey bird which resemble the colour of her saree has been crushed to death under his bots and now he experiences the smell of the bird in that room. The author feels that the love of death is the perfection of love. At last in some way the woman is able to get away from that person and in a hurry she went into an unconditional lift and presses the button without noticing the out of order board and finally meets her death. This story reveals that how far one tries to run away from the clutches of death, it is inevitable.

Death is the common theme where both the poets meet through in their own different ways. Of course Sylvia plath valiantly met her goal and kamaladas was "saved". The burning

rage about death is absent in Sylvia plaths later poems as she feels only a shadow of her exists, she wants to offer her body to her friend, philosopher and guide

The sea  
 Bareft of soul  
 My body shall be bare  
 Bareft of body  
 My soul shall be bare  
 Which would you rather have.  
 O kind sea  
 Which is the more dead of the two. (5)

Kamaladas knew the answer for this question as she was aware that her soul has been killed and only she wanted to get rid of her physical body. But the streak of love was strong which pulled her from the jaws of death.

I have enough courage to die,  
 But not enough  
 Not enough to disobey him  
 Who said do not die  
 And hurt me that certain way  
 The frustration arises when  
 she fails to act as happy woman  
 the problem is, she observes  
 I must pretend  
 I must act the role of happy women  
 Happy wife,  
 I must keep the right distance between me and the low.  
 She could not pretend as a happy contented wife  
 Which she never was:  
 ..... you called me wife  
 I was taught to break saccharine  
 Into your tea and  
 Covering  
 Beneath your monstrous ego.  
 I ate the magic loaf and became a dwarf.

This almost echoes the same sentiments expressed in Sylvia plaths ‘Applicants’ though kamaladas was fortunate to experience parental love. It was true she was brought up and influenced by her grandmother. Her nostalgia to go back to the sea and became a child again finds a place in many of her poems. She loses her identity once she is married. Death was introduced when she lost her father. The questions which she could not find answers haunted her .

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 is invisible  
 She reflects on the privileges of the ones who can ask questions :  
 They are lucky  
 Who ask questions and move on

Before

The answer come (7)

Kamaladas finds that still the question is hunting her the question about the validity of life and love.

Ask me why life is short  
 And love is shorter still,  
 Ask me what is bliss and  
 What its price (8)

She as a person might have paid a heavy price to know the answer but the reader are benefited through her poems which are the result of this eloquent quest various poems can be cited as examples where both poets, Sylvia plath and kamala das have spoken about in the same vein. Sea imagery is found in both poets, which they employ to imply death though used with different connotation kamala das sounds more sentimental when she says

O sea  
 you generous cow  
 you and i are big flops  
 we are too sentimental  
 for our own good (9)

The poem 'vortex' is a real whirlpool of air and fire which sweeps her emotionally kamala das muses

Only the soul know how to sing  
 At the vortex of the sea  
 There must be a sun slumbering  
 At the vortex of the sea .

The fixed vortex becomes more powerful in Sylvia plath' poems. She wanted her soul to be reflected in that

They threaten  
 To let me through to a heaven  
 Stainless and fatherless, a dark water . !

Many critics agree that was no difference between real between real sea and imaginary sea. Her mind and the world, her sea and the real sea did not divide until she was nine. She learned to grow out of her childhood sentiments and viewed at it more objectively, but for kamala das, sea is still a personification, to whom she would address, directly and confess and she questions:

Bareft of my soul  
 My body shall be bare  
 Bareft of body  
 My soul shall be bare.  
 Which would you rather have  
 O kind sea  
 Which is the more dead of the two ? (10)

Sometimes the death wish of both the poets is expensed in a strikingly simple language. Death wish resonates when Sylvia plath says:

I am vertical  
 But I would rather be horizontal.(11)

Sylvia Plath remains obsessed with death and hides her true self “ eventually she would yearn to kill her false self so that her real one might be free of it. That seems to be the logic that lay behind her life long obsession with suicide.” She dies repeatedly poem after poem exorcizing herself from all prejudices guilt and pangs through confession. Death is a birth for her and a beginning of new life. Here Plath seems resemble with that Alice Miller refers to in her book. “suicide really is the only possible way to express the true self at the expense of life itself.” (Miller 272)

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