



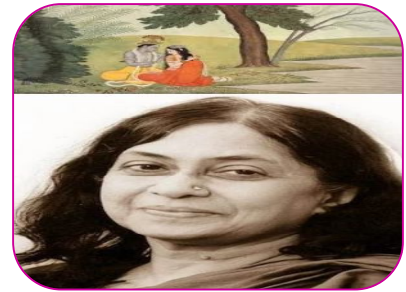
## MOTIF OF RADHA-KRISHANA LOVE IN THE WRITINGS OF KAMALA DAS

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### ABSTRACT:

*Krishna is a feeling, an emotion, a realization, a spirit that cannot be explained or categorized in words but can be felt internally only if you have a wild dedication, a crazy craving and a devotional passion for Him. Not only He but also His flute, shell (Panchjanya), dance (Raas) all are the sources of creation, energy and positivity. He is Supreme Being but does not hesitate in driving the chariot of Arjuna for religion's sake, breaching the hair of Draupadi for friendship's sake, and even washing the feet of Yudhishithira for politics' sake. He is the essence, substance and quintessence of the world, therefore, controls the whole world but surprisingly His control is in someone else's hands who is equally unique, peerless, and unexcelled in herself that is Radha. Due to these very unique qualities, she is called albeli sarkar. Being His soulmate, she is regarded fortunate enough but it is not easy to be Radha. To be Radha one needs the surrender of ego, the renunciation of desires and a strong will power to lead a life of separation. To know her one needs the sight, heart and mind of Krishna. To light the firewood (yajna) of love, Radha's non-dualistic approach is needed. She dips into the river of love without thinking of recovering or crossing it. Present paper intends to focus on her search for spiritual love in some of her poems and in her autobiography My Story.*



**KEYWORDS:** *Feminine psyche, Spirituality, Divine, Ideal love.*

### INTRODUCTION

Krishna is being recognized completely miraculous, marvelous and relevant in present time...a youth of around five thousand years old. He is complete, innovative and indifferent for Himself and interested in others. His implied beauty attracts Radha naturally because like Krishna, she is also complete. They complement and complete each other. Krishna does not love, demands not love rather is Himself love. They are each other's souls and power. Their love comprises the vastness of ocean of completeness whose mystery can be understood only after delving deep into it. The non-duality of their love is so vast that it enwraps everything- body, mind, soul, world, God and the whole universe in it. Nothing remains beyond this union. This spiritual fire does not care to be lit or put out rather when being burnt for once it burns and burns always.

Kamala Das is one of the few most important English poets in India who successfully poeticizes the modern Indian feminine psyche. She is a natural poet who celebrates woman's body and pleads for its integrity in her poems. Her poetic genius includes apparent imaginative urges, stylistic innovation, richness of texture and sharp feminine sensibility. Das generalizes the miseries and sufferings of every woman across time and place. She is not ready to yield or accept her lot silently. To give voice to her

suppressed feelings of unfulfilled love, dissatisfaction, inner vacuum, anger, anguish and agony, she takes the help of various images like nature, human body, heart and the myth of Radha and Krishna. She is regarded mainly a poetess who celebrates the charms of the body and urges of the sex but somewhere in her inner self craves for emotional identity which can be noticed in some of her poems.

Kamala Das was married at an early age, and did not find her conjugal life happy or satisfactory (as the tone of her poems suggests and her autobiography reaffirms) so she can be seen searching for a perfect man throughout her life. She talks of an idealized entity who cannot be a being-in-the-world. Wandering in the world of imagination, she longs for true love of Krishna, the eternal lover, whose presence can be felt deep in the heart. This is effectively articulated in the poem "Ghanshyam":

Ghanshyam,  
 You have like a koel built your  
 Nest in the arbour of my heart.  
 My life until now a sleeping jungle  
 Is at last astir with music  
 You lead me along a route that I have never known before  
 But at each turn when I near you  
 Like a spectral flame you vanish. (Tonight, This Savage Rite, 18)

In her life she announces to love only Krishna whose mystic presence she always feels so decides firmly to marry with Him only. She narrates about it very romantically and with full possessiveness in her autobiography:

Through the smoke of the incense I saw the beauteous smile of my Krishna. Always, always, I shall love you I told him, not speaking aloud but willing Him to hear me, only you will be my husband, only your horoscope will match with mine.... (My Story, 92)

She not only has deep faith in the existence of Krishna but also is fully sure of her love for Him. Therefore, while having pregnancy her declaration of delivering a baby boy who "will look like Krishna" (92) comes to be true in her life. Similarly, on her first wedding night, she requests her husband to "first pray to Krishna" (89) which is outrightly rejected.

Her love poems can mainly be divided into two phases, one is obsessed with the obvious carnal pleasure while the other drifted to the ideal love. She yearns for the legendry Radha-Krishna type of love which merges in it everything- egos, desires, urges and even selves of the two into one and only thing left there is their non-dualistic approach. It is this merging which ensures complete freedom which she was searching for throughout her life. In his article "Body and Beyond: Love Poetry of Kamala Das," P. Mallikarjuna Rao defines beautifully her approach thus: "She surmises herself as Radha who goes in search of Krishna, the ideal lover, in spite of her marriage. This brings into her poetic context the *Abhisarika* tradition of Sanskrit poetry." He explains *Abhisarika* tradition when "a woman goes to meet her lover braving elements, darkness etc. She is supposed to be Radha and her lover Krishna." (*Kamala Das: A Critical Spectrum*, 59, 63)

In her later stage of life she even tries adultery for a while in her search for a true lover but in vain. She describes very interestingly in *My Story* His entry in her life but as a human being thus: "Then He came, not wearing a crown, not wearing make-up, but making a quiet entry...He had come to claim me, ultimately. Thereafter He dwelt in my dreams." (185) J. K. Nair supports her in this exploration but only in the world of fantasy: "...because in the dual world complexity as explained earlier, i.e., ones existence in the 'real world' and 'the world of fantasy,' whatever is not attained in the 'real world' is 'realized' in the creative self's 'sojourn' in the 'world of fantasy.'" (*Cutting Edges*, 200) He goes far to the extent of "union between the ideal lover and ideal beloved" which "takes place in a dreamy state of mind" and is "more important and more legitimate than any worldly commitments." (*Cutting Edges*, 201)

The search for platonic love becomes poet's main concern in life which works as an insulator to reveal her true self. So far as the use of the motif of Radha- Krishna love in her poems is concerned, her purpose is never religious or devotional as Fritz Blackwell opines that the poet's "concern is literary

and existential, not religious; she is using a religious concept for a literary motif and metaphor." (*Journal of South Asian Lit.*, 13) For the poet this ideal lover is the archetypal Krishna who is considered as the universal lover of all in the world. Mohanlal Sharma calls Him her soulmate so remarks: "Throughout her multifarious relationships, she was in quest of her spiritual paramour, the eternal companion of her soul, the Divine Mate, her Krishna." (*Studies in Contemporary Indo-English Verse*, 104) In her fantasy she longs for the companionship and sympathy of a man as she writes in her autobiography:

I had expected him to take me in his arms and stroke my face, my hair, my hands, and whisper loving words. I had expected him to be all that I wanted my father to be, and my mother. I wanted conversation, companionship and warmth. Sex was far from my thoughts. I had hoped that he would remove with one sweep of his benign arms, the loneliness of my life.... (*My Story*, 84)

She craves for an emotional bonding so changes her mates also but receives only carnal pleasures from all of them. Soon she realizes the futility of her search for ideal love and gets fed up by the articulation of her sexual instincts, so turns to Lord Krishna with whom only the dissolution of the individual self and the total identification is possible. This intimacy of Radha is expressed in her poem "Radha" which she feels in the embraces of Krishna:

Everything in me  
Is melting, even the hardness at core  
O, Krishna, I am melting, melting, melting  
Nothing remains but  
You.... (*The Descendants*, 9)

This is the complete union of two souls, total oblivion of the world around and non-dualistic approach of Radha which she longs for throughout her life and where all 'the hardness' disappears and everything of two melts into one. Further, she imagines of going to the bank of a river (*Yamuna*) under the *Kadamb* tree and longs for repentance of her sinful soul:

This becomes from this hour  
Our river and this old Kadamba  
Tree, ours alone, for our homeless  
Souls to return someday  
To hang like bats from its pure  
Physicality.... ("Radha-Krishna," *Summer in Calcutta*, 37)

Prof. A. N. Dwivedi also points out the mythical framework given to her quest for true love when he remarks:

This mythical framework is identified with the Radha-Krishna syndrome, or occasionally with the Mira Bai-Krishna relationship. It is this framework that saves her, in some degree, from the charges of obscenity and promiscuity...The Radha-Krishna syndrome is witnessed in all her poetical collections. (*Kamala Das and Her Poetry*, 36-37)

In her fantasy she is able to visualize the pain and inner turmoil of Radha when Krishna must have left her in Braj for forever and went to Mathura and afterwards Dwarka not to come back ever. On the same night Radha finds herself completely numb and lifeless in her husband's arms while being loved and feels the moves of his hands like the nipping of maggots on a corpse:

At sunset, on the river bank, Krishna  
Loved her for the last time and left...  
That night in her husband's arms, Radha felt  
So dead that he asked, What is wrong,  
Do you mind my kisses, love? And she said,  
No, not at all, but thought, What is  
It to the corpse if the maggots nip? ("Maggots," *The Descendants*, 22)

Here, the poet suggests that after Radha (poetess herself) has lost her love for ever, her husband's physical touch to her is nothing but the 'nipping of the maggots' on her lifeless body. Through

the myth of Radha's separation from Krishna, the poet, in fact, depicts the pain and suffering of each woman who has to surrender her body without her emotional and mental involvement with her life partner. In another poem through the character of Radha, she tells the reason behind the ocean like depth and vastness of Radha-Krishna love which lies not in the physical union but in getting mature after burning in the fire of separation. The poet says: "The long waiting/ Had made their bond so chaste...." ("Radha," *The Descendents*, 9)

To her Krishna is the only soothing source from the inner anxieties of real world. She often thinks of "His blueness, His wide eyes and His knowing smile," who will come to her in "myriad shapes" "to fondle" her. (*My Story*, 186) His presence works as a therapeutic agent to balance the abstract essence of life. Anisur Rahman throws light on the curative function behind her craving for Krishna:

Her search for the beautiful Krishna and her act of remembering the past are basically united in her overall poetic process. These are the gestures of her relief and both perform a curative function. The present with its drab realities cannot soothe her. So, she remembers the glorious past and craves for Krishna/ the symbol of relief she attains some measure of equipoise and transcends the aches of the present. (*The Expressive Form*, 25)

Thus, with the employment of Radha-Krishna love motif, Kamala Das is, in fact, seeking an ideal paramour not a spiritual paramour. She herself confesses, "I was looking for an ideal lover. I was looking for the one who went to Mathura and forgot to return to his Radha." (*My Story*, 171) Her relation with Krishna is purely human not divine who is the symbol of perfect humanistic qualities, a man who gives equal recognition to women, stands for the profile of an equal sympathetic love partner, and is the reflection of her self's mere longing to reach for the unfathomable. By implying her longingness as well as belongingness to Krishna in her poetry, undoubtedly, Kamala Das has depicted the consciousness of her soul which is pricking her continuously to give vent to her spiritual and emotional longing as the calls of a wakeful soul cannot be suppressed.

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