

## MAJOR INDIAN ENGLISH WOMEN POETS AND THE THEME OF LOVE

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The appearance of a large number of women poets on the platform of Indian English poetry is a momentous attribute of Indian English literature. Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Das, Gauri Deshpande, Mamta Kalia, Monica Varma, Margaret Chatterjee, Anna Sujata Mathai, Sunita Jain etc. correspond to a dominant woman sensibility. This sensibility has its wide-ranging expressions in Indian English poetry. They constantly write as a woman. The distinguishing feature of their poetry is their confessional tone and open, candid, brave and sensible manifestation of their approach to love, sex and lust. Murli Das Melwani rightly comments about Indian English women poets, "Their themes are few in number. Thwarted desires, the frustration of living in a male dominated world, sex, and of course love are the commoner ones."

The love poems of Sarojini Naidu carved a niche in Indian English poetry. She has written 184 lyrics and out of those lyrics 66 are love poems. She often takes love as a significant and inevitable emotion of woman, hence, she approaches love from a woman point of view. Therefore we find the lack of warmth and compassion in her love poems. The love poems of Sarojini do not dwell upon the single side of love but upon the various aspects of love like separation, jealousy and distrust. The glow, the ecstasy, the recoil, the resentment, the despair, the reaction, the abasement, the acceptance – all are here. Her love poems are autobiographical which project her profound affection for Dr. Govind Rajalu Naidu. Later she was married to him despite parental and caste opposition. Her love poems are romantic of first order. The poems in the trilogy *The Temple* are finest reflection of her personal experiences. They are filled with the romanticism of medieval love poetry:

*Bring no fragrant sandal-paste,  
Let me gather, love, instead  
The entranced and flowering dust  
You have honoured with your tread  
For mine eyelids and mine head.*

Sarojini's poems present love as an achievable goal. Joy and pain are two prominent features of her love poetry. Her poems like *Indian Love Song*, *Humayun to Zobeida*, *The Poet's Love Song*, *The song of Radha*, *the milkmaid* etc. reflect the passionate feelings of ecstasy in love. *The song of Radha, the milkmaid* depicts the absolute assimilation of Radha, the divine beloved with Lord Krishna. For Sarojini love is the unification of two minds. This poem shows how love excels all other emotions of human being. Mulkraj Anand aptly comments on this poem, "Here the poetry of romanticism, of ornate epithets and delicate similes, has become infused with transcendental experience. Sarojini has transformed love as

personal desire into divine love, and given it a sense of eternity of the universal.” *The temple* is a collection of 24 love poems by Sarojini Naidu. This collection reflects the three aspects of love which are sub-titled as *The gate of Delight*, *The path of Tears* and *The Sanctuary*. The collection describes love as an ultimate power which alters all trivial passions into ecstasy and its hard path takes us to a perfect transcendental state. Love is happiness, love is worship to God. The beloved and lover become one and now they are centre of bliss for each other. Sometimes the path of love is hard which leads to the pain of love:

*You plucked my heart and broke it,  
O my Love;  
And bleeding, flung it down.....*

True love is eternal. True lovers may not achieve the completion of their love in this life but they are unified after death:

*So shall my soul, redeemed, reborn  
Attain thy side*

Here love becomes the worship and rises above the hardship that the soul suffers. Kamala Das is predominantly a poet of love, sex and lust, pain, anxiety, downhearted and disappointment. Love, the very strong feeling of human flesh, upsets and disgraces her and gives only frustration. Her poems are autobiographical in which she openly confesses her own experiences of pain in love and toil and turmoil in married life. The poem ‘Introduction’ is her one of the best poem giving the way to her strong desire for genuine love. Here she asks men for true love but nobody could quench her thirst for true love. She writes:

When  
I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask  
For, he drew a youth of sixteen into the  
Bedroom and closed the door. He did not beat me  
But my sad woman-body felt so beaten.  
The weight of my breast and womb crushed me.

H.M.Williams calls it, “ a witty and moving apologia which with economy, deftness and attractive simplicity is both a vivid self analysis and a poignant assertion of her individuality against social and cultural conformity. Here the organization of the poem is inevitable and the form exactly right.” *The Testing of Sirens* is another poem instilled with pain and expresses her disappointment and unavoidable pain of love:

*Shut my eyes, but inside eyelids, there was  
No more night, no more love, or peace, only  
The white, white sun burning, burning, burning....  
And why does love come to me like pain  
Again and again and again.*

Many of her poems are about her search for identity through love and lust. This theme of love has been projected in her poetry candidly and bravely. She explores the stress in man-woman relationship, the absence of true love and excruciating sexual dictatorship in all her poetry. Sometimes she is fearless to reflect utter lustfulness devoid of love. In *Looking Glass* she frankly confesses:

*Stand nude before the glass with him  
So that he sees himself the stronger one  
And believes it so, and you so much more  
Softer, younger, lovelier.  
and  
Gift him all,  
Gift him what makes you woman, the scent of  
Long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts  
The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your  
Endless female hungers.*

In the poetry of Kamala Das love and hate often go hand in hand. The reflection of sexual liberty is always combined with the self – disgust manifested through the frustration in love. The panorama of Kamala Das's poetry includes the revelations and confessions of her strong desire for love and lust. In dealing with the theme of love she is quite feminine. She is very much proud for her victory to make men love her. Her poems are stories of her victory over men in the game of sex. In short her poems are like a thin line that separates fulfillment and unfulfilment in love. The theme of her poems is only the strivings to search herself beyond the physical and in this way to find freedom to write. The disappointed love and the feelings of frustration and desires for isolated survival forced Kamala Das to write poems.

Monika Varma writes about her own experiences in her poetry. Her poems are remarkable for social awareness, actual description of nature and an honest projection of the strong feelings like love. Her love poems are much influenced by Kalidasa. Poems like *Gold- mulched Hours* and *Green Leaves are Gold* are filled profoundly with the feelings of love:

*This sky is rounded  
Like the under reaches of your breasts,  
My love.*

Monika Varma's love poems are rich in profound passion. Love for nature and sensual love go side by side in her poetry. The subject matter of GauriDeshpande's poetry is love and man woman relationship. K.N. Daruwalla observes: Anchored in the world around her, Gauri Deshpande's poetry deals with the minutiae of everyday life, the coming of lover. And the death of puppy dog, ingratitude of children. Everything is grist to her mill, from the city with its greasy cares and harsh endearments to a trees cape. To her love is a meeting mating reason. There is much of blood and sweat and clenched teeth, much lashing and throbbing in her love poetry:

*Teeth clenched  
Breath held  
I wait*

LakshmiKanan is a well known poet of Indian English poetry. Her poems are the manifestation of her struggle to find her identity, love and dark realities. She views love from a woman's point of view. She is aware of her emotions of love as well as the patriarchy of the male dominant world. She has imparted individual voice to her love poems. For her love is frail:

*is it love for you  
that makes you seem so  
mortal to me, suddenly  
so fragile*

Sunita Jain is primarily a poet of love. She is a projector of various moods and colours of love, romance and passion. She reflects the reciprocation of love with simplicity and frankness. The solemn and ominous side of love haunted her greatly. Her feelings of love find its best way in the poem *I Fall Not Knowing Why*:

*The old meanings acquire  
New symbols as you  
Walk my love  
lean and lost in your own dark mystery,  
uncaring of an ordinary day  
I fall not knowing why  
in love with you  
with self, I am in a thousand  
little ways.*

Indian English women poets never lag behind in projecting their Indian feminine sensibility. The emotion of love occupies most of the part of their psyche. Their poems are reflections of this psyche in the context of social traits. This feminine sensibility has illumined their position in Indian society.

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