

Haque

The Dance of The Eunuchs

Eng. H-3 P. 7th

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M A HAQUE

'The Dance of The Eunuch' is a beautiful poem by Kamala Das, an Indo-English poetess of distinct traits. Kamala Das commands a great respect both in English and Malayalam Literature. Her Poetry is remarkable for autobiographical notes and pathos of the life of women. Her theme is usually love and she always communicates a powerful female sensibility in her poems. 'Summer in Calcutta' and 'The Secularists' are her famous volumes of verses in English. In the present poem, she realistically paints the pathetic life of the Eunuchs, who earn their livelihood by dancing in even odd situations. The poem is also marked for its simplicity of diction, delicate images and lucid expression. Let us see the poem in a brief.

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In the given poem, the poetess is mainly concerned with the miserable condition of the Eunuchs, the castrated persons. They live in their own world that is different from ours. They undergo lots of hardship for their livelihood. They perform dances in the public places. They come on stage in their dancing attire and look charming in 'wide skirts' and 'jingling anklets'. They dance rhythmically in tune with sound of the cymbal and jingling of anklets with 'long braids flying', beneath the fiery gulmohar. They go on dancing and dancing in all situations till the last drops of blood in their body. They put out their whole while dancing.

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"... Beneath the fiery gulmohar, with long braids flying, dark eyes flashing, they danced and they danced, oh, they danced till they bled...."

The Eunuchs decorate themselves with green tattoos on their cheeks and dark and fair jasmines in their hairs. They sing melodious songs. But the themes of their songs are generally melancholic in tones, for they sing of their dying lovers and also of 'children life unborn'. Though their voice may be rough and harsh,

Their songs are very sweet that are enjoyed by people like anything. The audiences are often seen either beating their drums or beating their own breasts and wailing or writhing in vacant ecstasy.

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..... Their voices were harsh, their songs melancholy; they sang of lovers dying and of children left unborn... Some beat their drums, others beat their sorry breasts and wailed and writhed in vacant ecstasy."

Though the Eunuchs' cheeks are tattooed and their eyes are glittering, they are physically lean and thin. They are not sadder than the half-burnt logs taken from the funeral pyres. A kind of dryness and rottenness can be useasily found on their faces. Their condition is so wretched that even the animals and birds become mute to see them. Not only human beings but also the Nature is not happy with their sad plight.

..... They were thin in limbs and dry, like half burnt logs from funeral pyres, a drought and rottenness were in each of them. Even the crows were so silent on trees, and the children wide-eyed, still."

The Nature takes pity on the hapless condition of the Eunuchs. The sky crackles and sheds its tears on their plight in shape of rain drops. The smell of the scanty rain in the dust is like that of the urine of a lizard or a mice in attics. Here, Kamla Das artistically stresses the intensity of their sufferings. She clearly points out though in a sarcastic tone, that their plight is so severe, so unnoticed that neither man nor Nature feels real pity for them. That is why the rain drops are not more than the urine of a lizard or a mice.

Thus, we see that here, Kamla Das is pre-occupied with the pathetic condition of the Eunuchs.

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She also points out that they do not get any kind of care and love either from mankind or from God. Her subtle images and artistic delineation of situation make us realise the intensity of their ever deepening plight. Really, it is a great poem of Kamala Das that reveals her poetic genius as well as her love for the poor and neglected members of our society.

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