

## A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE ALIENATED MOTHER'S IN THE STORY OF KAMALA DAS' THE CRUEL RING OF TRUTH AND NATALYA BARANSKAYA'S THE KISS

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Natalya Baranskaya and Kamala Das is known as the mirror of early Russian and Indian Feminism. Baranskaya a soviet writer of short stories began writing at the age of 26 after her retirement. Baranskaya's representation of women is more multi-faceted. Rather than standing aside from power struggles of men, many of Baranskaya's women get involved in these power struggles, sometimes as victims, sometimes as executioners. Kamal Das was a Malayalam short story writer, poet, novelist and essayist. She was called Kamala Das, Madhavikutty, and Kamala Suraiya. Each name represented a body of her works, a phase of her life or an aspect of her personality. Kamala Das infused the lightness of innocence, force of feminine charm, complexities, of the heart and the ineffable allure of simplicity into Malayalam literature through a series of delicately nuanced and daintily sensitive stories. The mental state of alienated mothers are shown in the stories of Natalya Baranskaya's *The Kiss* and Kamala Das' *The Cruel Ring of Truth*.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Natalya Baranskaya, Kamala Das, Widowed Motherhood, Alienated Mothers, Single Daughter*

### **INTRODUCTION**

*“Single parent mother's who aren't  
spending their time looking for a man  
but spending their time providing for their  
children are the most admirable people on earth”*

Women's writing is a transparent expression of their authentic experience. The myriad conflicts faced by women in their daily lives are woven into a fictional or a real world. Short stories written by women writers have the aim of creating an urgent awareness amongst people regarding the position of women in the society and also the injustice done to them. They deal with social inequalities and prevalent exploitations.

Kamala Das has been hailed as the new woman of Indian writing in English. She was a poet, novelist, short story writer and essayist. She has written over a hundred and fifty stories in Malayalam. She is a writer who consistently dwells deeply into her consciousness to create female images that are not once she and the other.

Natalya Vladimirovna Baranskaya was a soviet writer of short stories. Baranskaya concerns herself exclusively with female characters and their plight, but her concerns transcend gender boundary. The suffering and grief endured by her characters are personal but they are reduplicated endlessly and hence attain universal dimensions.

The study of Natalya Baranskaya and Kamala Das reveals that these authors reconstruct the life of Russian and Indian women and particularly their suppression and social reaction through their stories. Their short fictions depict the agony of woman and her social oppression. In their works Kamala Das and Baranskaya depict the inner world of modern women with great psychological insight and questions with great vehemence. Both the writers reveal their vision and philosophy of life through their short fictions.

The mental states of a widowed motherhood are shown in the stories of Kamala Das' *The Cruel Ring of Truth* and Natalya Baranskaya's *The Kiss*. To a traditional woman matrimony is incomplete without motherhood. Motherhood is regarded as the 'biological destiny' and the greatest ambition of a woman. A child is considered to be a woman's happiness and her justification, through which she is supposed to find self-fulfilment and self-realization. Motherhood has always held a very high position in all society. The mother, as a matter of fact, enjoys a higher position of honour than the father himself. A Sanyasi need not stand up to pay his respect to his father. But he must do so if his mother pays a visit to him.

In Natalya Baranskaya's *Kiss* she shows the loneliness of a widowed mother after the only daughter's marriage. Nadezhda Mikhailovna, a senior scholar at the Institute of the USSR Academy of Sciences, was a widowed mother. At the very early years of her married life itself she lost her husband and she lived for her only daughter Natalya. As a young woman she also had many desires. But she never thought about another marriage and never got engaged with other men. Doing her job she brought up her daughter fulfilling all her wishes.

Nadezhda lived in the belief that her daughter will be there to take care in all her needs. But after Natalya's marriage she gave less importance to her mother. She rarely came to see her mother. Thus, Nadezhda became alone in her one room apartment. After her daughter gave birth to a child she became much more selfish. Hence Nadezhda failed to get the love and care which a mother desires to get during her old age.

In order to get out of her loneliness she got acquainted to Viktor a young man. When Viktor phoned and told her that he will come the next day evening to her home she became enthusiastic. The below quotes from the texts is clear evidence for her happy mind.

Nadezhda cleaned the apartment, then took a bath, applied a yeast facial mask, and went to bed earlier than usual. Even before she had time to think about what she was going to wear in the evening she'd fallen asleep. The next day she arose refreshed and walked a part of the way with pleasure. All day long she heard solvejg's words ringing in her head: "And you'll return to me, my heart tells me, my heart tells me..." she tried to stifle this singing with self-mockery, though, for that was really going too far. (5)

In the evening when she was getting ready to go for the shopping she got Natasha's phone call. Natasha wanted her to come and to stay with her. Usually she didn't have the habit of phoning her mother and enquiring her news. But when she was in need she phoned her mother and said:

"It would be great if you could spend the night. Seriozha would be late again. The baby was crying a lot-it was probably her teeth. The wind was so strong it was blowing right through the windows. It was cold and very bleak. and mom would you please buy some fruits? There was none here. And one more favour-would you get some two-kopek pieces for the phone?" (6)

Thus it becomes clear that Natasha was very selfish. She was a daughter who wants her mother only when she was in need, i.e., when nobody was there to help her.

Nadezhda Mikhailovna on the other hand disliked disappointing her daughter, but her mind wishes to receive Viktor. While doing shopping to receive Viktor she brought some apples and grapes for Natasha. From her act we can infer that even though Nadezhda was in a hurry to receive Viktor in her mind she always gave preference to her daughter. After her marriage Natasha never showed any attachment to her mother. She only called her when she was in need. But Nadezhda never showed any indifference in behaviour to Natasha. A true mother never hates her children. She always supports and loves her children and will be ready to sacrifice her happiness for the well-being of her children. Here we can see after making all the arrangements to receive Viktor at the very last moment her mind changed and she goes to see her daughter.

So Nadezhda was a mother who sacrificed her whole life for the happiness of her only daughter. As a wife she failed to get the love and care of her husband and at the end when she got acquainted with a young man, for the sake of her daughter she decided to avoid him. In all the way we can conclude that Nadezhda was an unlucky wife and mother.

In Kamala Das' *The Cruel Ring of Truth* we can find the similar type of a widowed mother. Her husband had died the year the daughter was born. Since then she had lived her life trying hard to fulfil the obligations of both father and mother. As a woman she also had all sorts of emotions and feelings. But she suppressed all her emotions and lived for her daughter. She feared that a second marriage would badly affect her daughter's future life. Many men had tried to tempt her into sin in the days when her beauty was a burden to her in the absence of a husband. But she had lived, envisioning both god and goddess in her daughter, without walking into anyone's sexual snares.

The mother loved and cared her daughter very much. To conceal from her daughter her middle-class origins, she had borrowed money from her friends, bought her silk clothes, arranged the top teachers of the city for her tuition, and lit coloured bulbs on the branches of trees in the garden on her birthdays. She brought up her without let her know any hardships in life. So the daughter never had any difficulties in her life.

The daughter was in love with another youth before marriage. He was an engineer in the navy. That relationship was shattered because of some misunderstanding. The daughter was responsible for the way the relationship crashed. But the mother didn't feel like rebuking her. She was always ready to find excuses for her daughter's actions and to put courage into her. On account of this, perhaps, her daughter embraced her on many occasions and whispered in her ear: "My mother is the best mother in the world". All these moments the mother used to feel in her underbelly a pain born of pride. She viewed as enemies the friends who advised her to restrain her daughter. In those days she needed only her daughter's love. (128)

From this it is clear that due to her excessive love the mother always supported her daughter without even thinking whether her daughter's actions were right or wrong.

Eventually the mother had given her in marriage to a rich, well-behaved youth. She told her neighbours countless times that, through that marriage, she had got a son as well. But the mother started eating the bitter fruits of loneliness for the first time in her life when her married daughter grew gradually distant from her. She had been too busy observing how her daughter moved about and how her facial expressions changed. The son-in-law hadn't spoken to her even formally

after the wedding. Her daughter shrugged her shoulders when she asked her who was responsible for her son-in-laws coldness towards her.

Till her marriage the daughter showed affection to her mother because her mother fulfilled all her desires and supports her in all her problems. But this daughter changed a lot after the marriage. The sudden change in the daughter's behaviour mentally depressed the mother. Before her daughter's marriage when she lay at night waiting for sleep with her arms around her daughter, she had never thought in her wildest dreams that days without her daughter and without her love were in store for her. Her conviction was that she would live with her daughter till death. But the very next day after the daughter's marriage she grew distant from her.

When the mother went to her daughter's house the behaviour of her only daughter gave her great pain. The daughter's harsh behaviour to the mother can be clear from her words:

"Why did you come so early, ma?" she asked.

The mother had thought that seeing her, she would be happy and kiss her on the cheeks as she used to. But there were no demonstrations of love.

"How come this change?" asked the mother.

"Change? What change?" asked the daughter.

"You don't seem to be happy I came. The bananas and vegetables I've brought you are in the car shed. Ask the servant to take them to the kitchen", said the mother.

"Mother, don't bring vegetables any more", said the daughter. "He doesn't like it".

"You don't use vegetables?"

The daughter was silent.

"What have I done, child?" asked the mother. "Why do you both of you treat me so cruelly or are you taken in somebody's cooked up stories?"

The daughter was silent at that moment too. The mother drove back, without waiting even to have tea. She realised that her presence was distasteful, not to the son-in-law alone, but to her daughter as well. (129)

From the daughter's words we can understand that the daughter hated seeing her mother and talking with her. The mother went to see her daughter with lots of expectations. But she can't endure the daughter's behaviour and drove back. That day the mother did not have her bath or cook her food. She sobbed, lying flat on her back in the darkened room and recalling over and over episodes from her daughter's childhood. She realised that her daughter's bits of conversation and mannerisms which used to delight her in the past were now making her very sad. She was surprised how her loving daughter have changed suddenly and become so cruel to her. She can't endure her loneliness.

With the passage of time the mother grew absolutely lonely. Her hair turned quite grey. She lost her sleep and always thought about her daughter. Her blood pressure went up due to lack of sleep, and her neighbours could view her only with sympathy. The daughter never came to see her and not even phoned her. Though her daughter never came to see her she never hates her. That's why when the neighbour's asked her whether her daughter visits her she told them that she

comes at night because both of them were busy during the day. Thus she learnt even to utter lies for her daughter. She told like this because she disliked others abusing her daughter.

When the mother was hospitalised she told her neighbour bystanders not to frighten her daughter unnecessarily by informing her that she was hospitalised. The mother told like this because she knew that her daughter will not come to see her and she didn't like others abusing her daughter. From his conversation it becomes clear that a true mother can't hate her children even though they didn't loved her back.

"Didn't your daughter come?" asked the launderer. She gave a tired smile. "She doesn't know", she said.

"I told her", said the greengrocer. "I went there this morning and told them. Master said they'd come to the hospital with money".

"It's getting dark", said the launderer.

"They may not be coming now", said the sweeper.

"Which scandalmonger has lied to the son about the mother? Sinner! Not even two years have passed after the daughter's wedding. She's so withered", the greengrocer said.

"This may be the work of your own daughter", said the sweeper. "She may have thought he should not hear from mother's lips the incidents of the past". (130)

The mother was shocked at those words. But she could hear in them the cruel ring of truth. Because there was no other reason for her daughter's rude behaviour. She might have frightened that if her husband mingled with her mother sometimes she might tell him about her past love affair. So in order to make her life secure she grew distant from her mother and also turned her husband against her mother. To make her life secure and happy the daughter knowingly avoids her mother. So here the daughter is too cruel to her mother, the only person who had suffered all alone to bring up her after her father's death. So here the mother's mind was utterly collapsed when she came to know that her only daughter and son-in-law have no attachment to her.

The mother in Natalya Baranskaya's. The Kiss and the mother in Kamala Das'. The Cruel Ring of Truth became a widow in their youth itself and they brought up their daughter all alone sacrificing all their happiness. Many men had tried to tempt them into sin but without walking into anyone's sexual snares they lived for their daughters. When they had given their daughters in marriage to rich, well-behaved youth they believed that their daughter and son-in-law would be there with them till the last breath. But unexpectedly, after the daughter's marriage when they began to behave like a stranger the mother's beliefs get collapsed.

The mother Nadezhda Mikhailovna in Baranskaya's story The Kiss got acquainted with Viktor a young man in order to get out of her loneliness. But her obligation towards her daughter forced her to avoid him. She always gave more importance to her daughter's feelings even though her daughter never showed any attachment to her after marriage.

Both these mothers had no other blood relations to share their feelings. Nobody was there to help them. In their life they never enjoyed any sort of happiness. They had sacrificed their whole life for the well-being of their daughters. But the selfish daughters never cared their mother. Hence the mother in these stories is really an embodiment of tolerance.

Although Natalya Baranskaya and Kamala Das are pre-occupied with the theme of incompatible marital couples yet we come across different kinds of women characters like lonely mothers in their stories. Both the writers predominantly centre their attention of the isolation and struggles associated with maternity, there by challenging its exalted status within Russian and Indian culture. Their portrayal of the loneliness of the mothers and their essential need for affection and companionship is notable in Baranskaya's story *The Kiss* and Kamala Das' story *The Cruel Ring of Truth*. By analysing the mother characters of Baranskaya and Kamala Das we are reminded of the universal truth that the mothers in the whole world are alike. They are embodiments of selfless love for their wards. Though their children never showed any love towards them they always loved them and were not able to hate them. They were ready to sacrifice all their joys for the well-being of their children

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