

## **Ans. Introduction**

"The Looking Glass" one of the finest lyrics in Descendants, is confessional and autobiographical. It records the personal frustrations and disillusionments in her own life. In this poem the poetess writes about the sufferings and humiliations, the woman kind has to suffer in a male dominated society. The woman in the poem is every woman that seeks love; the man is every man that wants a woman to satisfy his lust.

## **Development of Thought/Theme**

It is very easy for a woman to lure a man to sex. She only has to appreciate his masculinity and present him with all the female charms at his disposal. But the man is made differently. While the woman seeks spiritual bliss through sex, man is happy only with the gratification of his lustful desires. The man, after using the woman, throws her away and disappears out of her life, searches another woman.

## **Erotic Details**

The poem is replete with the details of the naked human body. The man and woman stand side by side naked before the looking glass. The poetess describes in all its details the female anatomy – "the musk of sweat between the breasts", "the warm shock of menstrual blood", and "all her female hungers", and male body. "his muscular frame contrasting with her 'softer, younger, lovelier self', his eyes becoming red with passions, the dropping of towel, even his Jerky way of urinating'.

## **A Love Poem**

'The Looking Glass' is a love poem. In spite of the nakedness shown in the poem, it does not look obscene. In fact, her aim in describing the nude bodies is not to rouse sexual instincts among her readers, she rather wants to lament the fact that while woman seeks self-fulfillment in love, man seeks only momentary thrills. The man deserts the woman and for her, it is then merely 'living without life. Thus without man's love, the woman decays not only spiritually but physically also. She simply wants to get love from man.



## **Feminine Sensibility**

The poetess is conscious of the fact that a woman is both a temptress and a victim of male sexual exploitation. Woman is always conscious of herself as woman but the poetess is also conscious of her being a victim of male lust.

## **A Rebel**

'The Looking Glass' is a daring piece as it describes the naked human bodies, both male and female, defy all social conventions, particular in the Indian context. She feels pride in being a woman.

## **Confessional and Autobiographical**

Kamla Das's poetry is confessional as well as autobiographical. 'The Freaks' deals with her sexual humiliation which is the central experience of her auto-biography – "My Experience". The man's lustful approach is the content strain of her poetry as well as of her autobiography.

## **Ironical in Tone**

The poem 'The Looking Glass' is ironical in tone. The poetess says that a woman should realize that the realization of love, for which she craves all through her life, is not her destiny. She is destined to play only a lustful role. Physical satisfaction can easily be had, but emotional fulfillment is not possible in this world. So in this male-dominated world, it is her primary duty to satisfy the male ego and accept her own feminine weakness.

## **Poetic Style**

Her diction is colloquial. The language is simple; the vocabulary is drawn from the language of day to day use. There is surcharge of emotions behind the words. Words come naturally to her; she has not to 'wait for words'; words acquire a new meaning in her poetry. In the poem 'The Looking Glass' e.g., sweat between her breasts' sweet smell, the Jerky way, he urinates' fascinates the excited beloved. Thus, in her poetry, common words acquire a new meaning.

## **Conclusion**

In the poem, the poetess reveals male lustfulness through the images culled from human anatomy, both male and female. It is unsurpassable as an expression of female sensibility.