

**Study of Identity Crises of Kamala das in her Autobiography “My  
Story”**

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**Abstract**

It is true that only a language is a universally recognized means of speech through which an author strives to pour in the rich pearls of his imagination and the great struggle to find

<https://doi.org/10.24113/ijellh.v7i11.10136>

compromise through uncompromising wilderness, making the real tale of true identity literature, Kamala Das protested against the society's prevailing systems. Her insulted feminine self went on emotional wanderings seeking to discover an identity and liberation expressly for her own and for the entire tradition of women in general. Her compassionate interpretation and description of the Indian woman's problem generally naturally turn her into a feminist. The world of "vacant ecstasy" and sterility was vividly visualized by Kamala Das through numerous functional images and symbols in her poetry. She finds herself catapulted into a series of situations where in the hands of male dominance she became merely a puppet. Being bold, through the medium of poetry and writing, she protested and expressed her frustrations, rancor and loneliness. Her poems epitomize the dilemma of modern Indian women trying to liberate her from the role bondage that patriarchal society sanctioned her sexually and domestically. Therefore, Kamala Das's voice to seek her own identity is women's voice to fight for better living conditions and equal human rights.

Keywords: genre, autobiography, dream of marriage, madness, vulgarism, honesty, etc.

Kamala Das often distinguishes herself as a unique prose author, and her most famous work "My Story" is credited with being her well-known prose work, first published in The Current Weekly, published in Bombay, before being published under the current title in 1973. The importance of her autobiography (My Story) lies primarily in the fact that, in addition to being an independent work on Kamala Das's life, it also acts as a guide to understand her internal suffering for her own identity and also guiding to reading her poems in order to help them understand them in context for their proper evaluation. Nonetheless, the book's generic identity has been highly controversial since its publication, and scholars' views on the subject

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are divided, as many of them are not inclined to believe that all the poet's juicy stuff and multiple sexual relationships described in *My Story* can really be a true autobiographical material.

Viewed from the perspective above, "My Story" presents a very confusing picture because, while going through the novel, the reader finds many such incidents and personalities that seem more fictional than actual, as it says, "There is no realistic picture and no clear descriptions of the time and space in which she grew up" (Chakravarty 2). Kamala Das describes in the preface of 'My story' that why she wants to write her autobiography, "My story is my autobiography which I began writing during my first serious bout with heart disease. The doctor thought, that writing would distract my mind, from the fear of a sudden death. Between short hours of sleep induced by the drugs to me by the nurses, I wrote continually, not merely to honor my commitment but because I wanted to empty myself of all the secrets so that I could depart when the time came, with a scrubbed-out conscience." (Das 3)

While writing her autobiography "My Story" it clearly proves that while writing about love and sex, about her suffering, the pen of the author becomes too slippery to spare even her close elderly relations as a grand aunt who, she claims, oppressed her husband "with her voluptuous body" (Das 23). She is so usual using suggestive and vulgar language that she uses expressions such as "I put my shyness aside and stripped it before her" (Das 135) while depicting a hospital scene. She describes with marked impudence even her most intimate moments, as she brutally recounts how Mr. Das, then her fiancé, kissed her abominably and "whenever he found me alone in a room, he began to plead with me to bare my breasts ... bruised my body and left blue and red marks on my skin" (Das 84), in all her words it is clearly reflected how she is suffering for her self-identity, in every circumstance she is brutally

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treated. Furthermore, she brings even a mother-son situation a sensual touch when she says that her son sleep with his "left hand tucked inside my nighties between my breasts" (Das 217). Mrs. Das alleges that her fiancé's actions deeply disturbed her, as she expected him to be as indulgent as her parents "to take me in his arms and stroke my head, my skin, my hands and whisper loving words... I wanted conversation affection and warmth. Sex was far from my thoughts. I had hoped he would eradicate the misery of my life with one movement of his gentle hands" (Das 84). She accuses Mr. Das again on the wedding night of teasing her, "by the extreme brutality of the attack... with my heart palpitating wildly I begged him to think of God" (Das 89). Nevertheless, as she confides, her husband is unable to complete the marriage; and although he repeatedly attempts to harm her, she is able to remain. "a virgin for nearly a fortnight after... marriage" (Das 90), it seems impossible to believe that a man who allows his wife to keep her so-called virginity intact for so long despite sharing a common room with her could be ruthless and violent. Therefore, given her strong convictions, neither her slurry words against her husband nor her argument that she was very naive at the time of marriage and knew nothing about what marriage was all about, can be considered true.

The above details clearly reflect that from the very beginning Mrs. Das is disenchanted with her husband, which is believed "was a case of hate at first sight" (Tiwari 127). Therefore, she fears that her marriage was solely decided by her family, where she seemed to be a slave whose strings were firmly held by her father. She also regrets that she has been treated as "a burden and a responsibility that neither (her) parents nor my grandmother could put up with for long" (Das 82). She also says how sorry she feels for her marriage with Mr. Das's that once when her father asks casually why she looks so slim and hasn't gained weight after marriage, she gets upset, "I wished then to cry and tell him that he had miscalculated and that I shouldn't have married the one I did, but I could not bring myself to hurt him" (Das 91). In fact, the main

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reason for the repulsion of Mrs. Das towards her husband is that he happens to be much older than her, allegedly with "one generation gap (and he) was all about desire. He wanted Kamala to satisfy and be cowed by his physical needs. This is the reason why she feels lonely and neglects and suffering for her own self. However she admits that being physically inexperienced at the time of marriage and not ready to take advantage of conjugal bliss is an embarrassment to her husband, as he is a veteran "in the rowdy way of sex he practiced with the maids who worked for his family (Das 90).It seems, however, that Mrs. Das suffers from a kind of inferiority complex and is envious even of her maid-servants, whom she considers more attractive physically than her, as she says, "I was thin, and my swollen breasts resembled a papaya tree." How much more voluptuous my servants are "(Das 94).In reality, Mrs Das seems to bear a feeling at all stages of her life that she is devoid of sexual appeal, in her childhood for her dark tint, after marriage for her tender age, and later in life for her poor health. In her autobiography kamla Das portray herself as what she terms "the carnal appetite of a young man" (Das 90)

Kamala Das was brave enough that no injustice or racism could be accepted. She was attending an English medium school in Calcutta with her brother. Her brother was dark and plump. Even though he was the best in the class, the white boys made fun of him and humiliated him by pushing him up his nostrils with a pencil. One day his front shirt was covered in blood. He was shocked at the cruelty of William ' Blakee, your blood is red, ' William the bully explained, Das was unable to cope with such insult, scratching his face in a rage.Kamala Das discussed the relationship of men and women in bold and realistic terms and paved the way for writings such as Shobha De, who argues that female sexuality can liberate and empower women. Anuradha Roy comments: "These writers have contributed substantially to the mammoth task of demystifying women and have helped to construct the individuality of

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women even in its physical and sexual dimensions. They have refused to be silenced on issues of sexual morality and ruthlessly exposed the shameful duplicity of standards.’(Roy)

My Story' reveals very effectively a rare type of vigor, courage, determination, and self-revelation. Among many other autobiographers, Das's ability to tell the truth is certainly very different. An autobiography is expected to write in a confessional fashion and my story is certainly in a confessional fashion and reads like diary pages. On Kamla Das Autobiography M.K. Naik remarks, "Kamala Das" person is no nympharmonic; she is every woman who seeks love she is beloved and betrayed expressing her 'endless female hungers' the muted whispers the love of womanhood; she may flaunt a grand flamboyant love, but in her heart of hearts she remains the eternal eve proudly celebrating her essential femininity.’’(Nair 27)The search for love is what predominates her writings as a natural result of an unusually sensitive mind haunted by a growing sense of deserted loneliness. She confesses about her early life as a faith in 'My Story.' She refers to her husband who has been vulgar, cruel and incapable of fundamental human dignity. The memoir also refers to an incident when her partner insulted her on her birthdays, stayed locked-in an adjacent room with a young man who was quite oblivious to her emotion. In Kamla Das, homosexuality created a sense of shame that comes across with brutal sharpness.

My Story succeeds in bringing out Kamla Das's inner strength and her search for self-identity in the midst of all kinds of stresses on her. She absolutely discards the inherent patriarchal quality of the weakening and constructs traditional taboos which she feels will deteriorate against her fundamental self and thus cracks open her cocoon and comes out of it to view the world around her better. Her story shows her search for belonging and freedom in her creative writing finds its fruition and fulfilment, "My Story" leads us to a romantic world where she puts on a mask to show us a woman's inner life concealed inside herself. Many

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events, though fictional, point to her soul's suffering, Kamala Das seems to have been inspired by writers such as D.H.Lawrence and Sylvia Plath. She also knows the technique of Freudian to paint the inner turmoil through passages that are like images of dreams. Kamala Das takes us to an elfin cave to show her inner sufferings, such as La Belle Dame sans Mercy, and sometimes we're left alone like the knight-at-arms. She has a mental system. We can't expect kamala das to read like M.K, Gandhi.

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