

THE AFFLICTION OF KAMALA DAS IN *MY STORY*: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL FROM MY PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT:

My Story was written by Kamala Das (Kamala Surayya) in 1973, and it was first published as *Ente Katha* in Malayalam. Soon after its publication, it fell under controversies due to its boldness, outspokenness and unconventional writing style. It remains the most popular autobiography by a woman and about women in India. The prominent themes in her autobiographies are unhappy marriage, discrimination, finding love outside marriage to fulfil her desire, betrayal, suffering, rebellious attitude, struggle for self-identity, etc. *My Story* depicts the different phases of the author's life, from her childhood and adulthood to her last breath. She admits her unconditional love for Lord Krishna or Ghanashyam. Her outspokenness regarding feminist ethos is remarkable. She shares her strong bond with her grandmother, who is always affectionate towards her. Her grandmother's love is contrary to the love she receives from her husband. She never accepts her husband wholeheartedly, as he treats her as a puppet. Her family arranged her marriage when she was only 16 years old to a man who was more than double in age to her. Since then, she has been suffering. Finally, one day she decides to go against the patriarchal society, norms and rules formed by the conventional society. She boldly writes about her private life without hesitation, later showing her evil side as she plays with and goes against the orthodox society. In this paper, the focus is on analysing the affliction, misery and suffering of Kamala Das in *My Story* and how she reacts to it unconventionally.

Keywords: *Kamala Das, a failed marriage, postcolonial, feminism, love, nostalgia, betrayal*

Das's early childhood:

My Story glances at the events and phases of Kamala Das's life that moulded her perspective and life. She was born in 1934 and spent her primordial stage of childhood in Calcutta. Though her parents were aesthetic, her childhood was full of negligence and solitude as her father and mother were at all the time occupied and at work. "I wondered why I was born to Indian parents instead of a white couple, who may have been proud of my verses." She mentions her teacher in kindergarten, who shouts at her by calling her "a peculiar child". She also adds

to it the reaction of her classmates by saying that the teacher laughs at her as though she is indicating for them to start laughing at her because she cannot gel with her classmates and sits alone. Kamala Das, her parents and siblings keep shifting between two states, i.e., from Kerala (her ancestral home) to Calcutta (her father's workplace) and vice-versa, which results in lacking stability, firmness and a desired family ambience. Das firmly depicts the discrimination she and her brother face at the European school they attend, which Britishers rule. She shares an instance where a poem is recited at

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the school audience, which Das writes, but a Scottish girl gets praised and acknowledged in her place because Das has a dark complexion. (Brown in colour) “When the visitors came, the brown children were always discreetly hidden away, swept under the carpet.” She also depicts the Hindu-Muslim riots and their influence on her family and friends due to the pre-and post-independence era. The effect of Gandhian philosophy could be seen in her in-law's family in Kerala.

Relationship with grandmother:

The author has a strong and unbreakable bond with her grandmother because, according to the author, her grandmother is the only person who loves and cares for her unconditionally and is very much affectionate towards her. She is in despair, and her heart breaks into pieces when she comes to know about the passing of her grandmother. she misses her presence immensely. She is reminded of her grandmother's happiest times and memorable days whenever she is reminded of her childhood.

Das's marriage; is a disaster:

She was married when she was only 15 to a Bank Manager named Madhav Das. Her married life is a complete failure, and she has a disruptive and troubled relationship with her husband. She fearlessly speaks about the viciousness of the first night of her marriage and how her husband assaults her body. She writes despairingly: “I was to be the victim of a young man's carnal hunger, and perhaps, out of our union, there would be born a few children.” Despite being used physically as an object by her husband, she writes of the bliss she senses in having kids, of becoming a loving mother and spending time with them as they grow. She then boldly describes her extramarital affairs, the quest for love and attraction towards men to fulfil her physical and emotional needs. She also touches on the theme of homosexuality and tells her readers that her husband behaves like a lover with his male friend in her presence. “Whenever I lay clutching my husband's feet at night, I felt that his love was never to be mine.”

Her wish to die:

She cannot accept the fact that her marriage has failed. She cannot return to her home, becoming a divorcee because of the excellent relationship between the families, which she does not want to spoil. Her parents and other family members are very concerned with the point of view of outsiders and outsiders' reactions in society to any event or action, and to the family, a broken marriage will be terrifying as a disease. “If I had at that time listened to the dictates of my conscious and left my husband, I would have found it impossible to find

another who would volunteer to marry me,” as she thinks she is not pretty enough and a mother of a two-year-old baby. She is a compelling author and poet when she conveys her feelings and emotions, i.e., searching for love and the graveness of the trauma she has faced due to discrimination, lack of self-identity, lack of emotional support, and lack of affection negligence. There comes the point when she thinks of ending her life by committing suicide. She finally accepts life's harsh and bitter reality and surrenders to her fate.

Her love and affection towards her children:

She describes the bond with her kids as full of care, love and affection. She experiences and has a warm and frank relationship with her kids. Her affliction, anguish, pain and suffering can be seen when her child falls sick. She almost goes insane and loses interest in everything else.

Her belief in Krishna:

She lays on the floor and prays to Krishna for her Child's recovery. She vows to remove all her ornaments and keep them at Krishna's feet if she saves her baby.

Dealing calmly with untimely death:

She falls sick and undergoes heart surgery. She deals patiently and gracefully with early death just the way she deals with her life. She never fears death, welcomes it, and addresses it as a stranger. She does not make death as sentimental as it could have been in other's stories. She accepts reality very gracefully. “I have been for years obsessed with the idea of death for. I believe life is a dream, and death is the only reality.”

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