

My Story: As Self Analysis

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Abstract: Kamala Das is one of internationally acclaimed poets who bring a new taste in poetry by being frank and transparent while writing about her. Before women poets did not reveal their hearts open so that their real nature about love and sex remain mysterious but Das unveils the screen in both her poetry and life writing about the nature of women in the affair of love and sex which is a new experience in literature.

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Self analysis or autobiography as a distinctive genre of literary study has been recognised since the late 18th century AD. Autobiography is a retroactive account of an individual's life. By the way a writer wants to present varieties of his experiences and events of his life to the readers. It can be considered as a truthful self study, self-analysis and self expression having a coherent event of stories of his life with a sense of rebelliousness against social injustice. It is an art of discovering one's self. As Ray Pascal in his book '*Design and Truth in Autobiography*' views, "It establishes certain stages in an individual life, makes link between them, and defines, implicitly or explicitly, a certain consistency of relationship between the self and the outside world." (9) An autobiography can open a new way of making sense of it. It speaks about the identity and its cultural and historical background. According to Philippe Lijeune, "the paradox of literary autobiography, its essential double game, is to pretend to be at the same time a truthful discourse and a work of art." (21) Autobiography written by men and autobiography written by women differs from each other to some extent in form. Susan Stanford Fried says in this regard, "A...man has the luxury of forgetting his... sex. He can think of himself as an 'individual'. Woman ...reminded at every turn in the cultural hall of mirrors of their sex...have no such luxury." (Autobiography and questions of Gender, p-2)

Among all the Indian women writers writing their autobiography Kamala Das is a prominent one. Das's autobiography *My Story* serves as a factual work rather than a literary one. Here she feels the difficulty of being a woman in Indian Society and finds love elsewhere overlooking the institution of marriage bond. She presents the lifeless, empty and dull image of marriage. Her offended feminine self went on emotional wonderings attempting to explore an Identity and freedom. Her extramarital lovemaking ever gives her peace of mind. Ultimately such adventures resulted in her struggle against her own

self reconstructing a new self. The autobiography has several facts of her femininity complaining of the failure of love both within and without the orbit of marriage. Presenting the tragic condition of the women writers she recalls her own situation and confesses, "I could find freedom only at night when I could ignore my family and became an independent person. I felt like myself only in the quiet hours of the night." The long tedious work at night makes her sick but she takes it optimistically and considers it a good luck as it gives her more time to write. Very frankly she discloses the trials and tribulations of life and she is the first one to break the mould and to establish a new attitude for the readers with which they are not at all familiar

She feels marriage a betrayal and in grief a disturbed note of feminine sensibility comes out from her mouth. "I needed security, I needed permanence, I needed two strong arms thrown around my shoulders and a soft voice is my ear. (Ibid-p-194) In an hour long interview with Sobha Warrior in "The Rediff Interview" Kamala Das expresses "I had the wrong gender for the occupation. Because women were expected to confine themselves to the realm of the kitchen and it was not a role entirely accepted by the society. A woman has to prove herself a good wife, a good mother before she could become anything else and that means years and years of waiting."

No woman poet is so open and frank like her. When she feels losing her freedom 'to fly', she takes her as a maid at home and utters her voice of protest:

"You turn me into a bird of stone,

A granite Dove." [The Old Playhouse and other poems.p-51]

A true realistic image of the lustful relationship between a man and a woman is reflected. She presents a world dominated by man where it is a woman's duty to admire his masculinity and out of that he can excite his passion and gratify his vanity as a superior being.

For a man, according to her, marriage is a momentary pleasure but for a woman it is a life long suffering. Women in our culture are expected to think of others without thinking of themselves and the male considers it a privilege as if it is his right. She hates a man who dominates women by means of physical force without having any respect for women sensibility.

With a deep sense of despair and frustration she opens her own story. She gets permission from her husband to publish *My Story* telling the fact that the book will add to their financial crisis. This must be a blow against the dignity of a sick wife. "He asked me to make it more sensational. I was the one who stopped at points, who could not go beyond, I remember clearly, I was sick and lying on my bed in Bombay Hospital and he came and said, "we need the money, write this sort of book." I did *My Story* came to be. In *My Story* she starts with a young girl's experience, a school going girl dominated by the British white skinned children to a young woman deprived of getting love.

With a strong sensibility she makes an honest confession of her wants. She protests against the male behaviour; the manner of treatment she got from her man. Breaking the entire conventional bond she craves for emotional fulfilment and a sense of belongingness. In her autobiography she writes, "Like the majority of city dwelling women, I too tried adultery for a short while, but I found it distasteful. My lover had entered the decline of his career and aroused in me, more than love, a strong sense of pity".

She ruminates the freedom and security what she has got in her grandmother's house during her childhood. She feels isolated after marriage in the absence of her grandmother who has been a source of affection and inspiration for her. Once during her serious illness (nervous breakdown) it is only the grandmother who nursed her back to perfect health. She celebrates her grandmother's house as her greatest comfort giving home.

"There is a house now far away where once
I received love.....That woman died.
The house withdrew into silence, snakes moved.
Among books I was then too young
To read, and my blood turned cold like the moon
How often I think of going
There.....[Summer In Calcutta 'My
Grandmother's House']

Most of her poems give examples to her painstaking efforts with life to transcend the SELF. Her poetic self rises from the common and ordinary level and search a smooth way for her life journey on an ideal path. Her poetic self wants freedom but

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her feminine self is always in the cage like a bird and she becomes the victim of male lust. Without getting true love and looking at the fleeting time giving birth to physical decay she speaks out her deep anguish,

"From the debris of house wrecks
Pick up my broken face,
Your bride's face,
Changed a little with the years,
I shall not remember
The betrayed honeymoon;
We are both such cynics,
You and I" [Lines To a Husband]

She focuses generally on love and treated it in a broader range with deeper feeling bringing to it an intensity of emotion and speech. Her sense of loneliness and disappointment are the larger theme of her poetry. Her poems are known and widespread for their unflinchingly honest exploration of the self and female sexuality, women's role in traditional Indian society and postcolonial identity. Powerful images in her work focus on marriage, motherhood, woman's relationship to their bodies and power over their sexuality and the role of woman is offered in traditional Indian society.

She feels insecure when she compares the nostalgic past with the dreamy present. She stands between the loving past and a pretentious present- a positive past and a negative present. She feels her living in capacity now and searches the real charm of life because she had already enjoyed the test of love and freedom in her childhood with the company of her grandmother. My Grandmother's House" is a constituent poem of Kamala Das's maiden publication *Summer in Calcutta*. Though short, the poem wraps within itself an intriguing sense of nostalgia and uprootedness. Her golden memories are her attachment with the grand mother and her satisfaction is her love for Srikrishna at her middle age. She presents the first phase of life a psychological turmoil, second a philosophical search and the third as spiritual quest.

The virtue of Indian women is determined by the values and tradition of Indian culture. As Simon de Beauvoir views in *Second Sex* "One is not born but rather become a woman". So the struggle for identity or the reconstruction of identity is the major theme of the Kamala Das's poetry. The subjectivity of the writer in the form of daughter, wife, beloved and mother is the essence of her autobiography. She goes towards self actualisation through the stages of frustration, rebellion and acceptance to achieve the reality of life.