

BREAKING OF THE BONDS IN KAMALA DAS'S *MY STORY*

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ABSTRACT:

Regardless of whether Kamala Das' *My Story* is a collection of memoirs or a fiction has been an exceptionally discussed question directly from its beginning and the creator by her faltering stand over the issue has herself been genuinely answerable for producing a great part of the warmth. For example, in the introduction of the book she genuinely asserts it to be a collection of memoirs, while later by her mixed up requests and odd reasons to safeguard her own self against the shame emerging out of her supposed inclusion in different love-desire undertakings, she appears to confuse intentionally the entire issue, providing for the story the tone of an anecdotal creation. It is so certainty renders sketchy the case of the author herself about the book being a life account and lends belief to the hypothesis that the occurrences depicted in the book in first individual are not really identified with the genuine of the writer, yet depend on the episodes occurring around her in the general public. In this setting, the current paper tries to look at the conflicting cases of the author and the contentions progressed by different researchers in regard thereof, supporting or negating the two speculations to empower us to come to a conceivable end result.

KEYWORDS: CONFESSION, STRUGGLE, LOVE, MARRIAGE, QUEST, IDENTITY, HYPOCRISY, OBSCENITY ETC.

In spite of the fact that basically an artist, Kamala Das separates herself likewise as an extraordinary author of writing and *My Story* has the credit of being her notable composition work, which is first serialized in *The Current Weekly* distributed from Bombay, before being distributed in 1973 under the current title. In actuality the significance of *My Story* for the most part lies in the way that other than being a free work on the life of Kamala Das, it likewise fills in as a key to read her poems to help comprehend them in context for their appropriate assessment. By and by, the nonexclusive character of the book has been profoundly questionable right from its distribution and the assessment of researchers is separated on the point, the same number of

them are not slanted to trust it that all the delicious stuff and numerous sexual connections of the writer described in *My Story* can truly establish a genuine self-portraying material. Nair clearly says that *My Story* it's anything but a verifiable personal history in the strict feeling of the term, so one “has to make a judicious use of the information given in it (and) should not pounce upon each juicy bit as if catching the criminal red-handed” (Nair ii). Iqbal Kaur also endeavours to say, “I personally feel that she is a woman obsessed not with lust and sex but with the concept of purity which she had inherited from the Nalapat women” (Kaur, ix-x, 129); it is suggesting along these lines that the book studded with parcel of disagreeable stuff can't be of Mrs. Das' own story. In any case, at the same time, she neglects to welcome that in the introduction of the book the author has herself completely expressed that the book is a life account, which she starts composing during her first genuine session with heart infirmity, so she can inform the individuals all regarding her before breathing her last, as needs be, she states, “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 v) But later during an interview, responding to a pointed question by the interviewer Iqbal Kaur as to whether *My Story* is a factual account of her life or is it the creation of her imagination, Das turns evasive saying “whether something happened to me or to another woman is immaterial and what really matters is the experience, the incident” (Kaur 164-165). This nervous, perplexing and fairly avoiding reaction of the author has driven the critics to make their own theories about the class of the book, to suit their own impulses and preferences. All things considered, it is surely depending upon the writer's last case that Mrs. Iqbal Kaur decides to deduce that *My Story* isn't really the tale of the author herself, but she “has been liberal enough to hide every woman in the burka of 'I', be it a lesbian, a girl indulging in extra-marital sex, an adulterous woman, a girl running from door to door for love or a raped girl...” and that “*My Story* could not entirely be an autobiography” (Kaur x-xi). Talking in the same vein Devindra Kohli also alleges that “When Kamala Das speaks for love outside marriage she is not really propagating adultery and infidelity, but merely searching for a relationship which gives both love and security” (Kohli 27). Clearly, in the event that one passes by these translations, the book as opposed to a self-portrayal turns into an impression of the common gender issues, especially those related with man-women relationship, which the author in her curiosity of style has liked to relate in the primary individual. It is maybe the motivation behind why Iqbal Kaur, yet additionally numerous others

are not slanted to treat *My Story* truly as a personal history and one like KRR Nair prefers to call it as a “partially autobiographical fantasy” (Nair 2).

Seen from the above point of view *My Story* presents an extremely baffled picture as while experiencing the book the peruser runs over numerous such occurrences and characters which show up preferably invented over genuine, as it is stated, “There is no realistic picture and no concrete details of the time and space in which she grew up” (Chakravarty 2). Furthermore, its story additionally needs network, which spread in fifty incoherent scenes, is definitely not a methodical introduction of the realities and occasions. Each scene is by all accounts free and has some different story to advice and new message to pass on. The believability of the greater part of the episodes appears to be exceptionally dubious basically considering the way that usually a normal thing stands blown past extents and the subtleties of some significant happenings superfluously smothered, offering ascend to numerous wild hypotheses. The story is likewise not adjusted and dependable, which is over-troubled with erotic nature introduced in a foul language frequently violating the limits of fairness. The book additionally doesn't look to fill any advantageous need yet appears to be fairly advancing extra-conjugal relations, which is not really allowable in any enlightened society of the world, as it will in general degenerate the psyche especially of the youthful readers by stirring their baser senses. Besides, there are umpteen examples in *My Story* to prove that while writing on love and sex the writer's pen becomes too slippery to spare even her close elderly relations like grand aunt who, she says, enslaved her husband “with her voluptuous body” (Das 23). She is so acclimated of utilizing intriguing and revolting language that even while portraying a hospital scene she utilizes articulations like “I put aside my shyness and stripped before her” (Das 135). She depicts even her most private minutes with checked insolence, as she boldly describes regarding how Mr. Das, at that point her fiancé, kissed her pitifully 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 the skin” (Das 84). Besides, she gives a sensual touch even to a mother-son situation as she says that her son would sleep with his “left hand tucked inside my nighties between my breasts” (Das 217). Clearly, the author is quick to portray the female structure straightforwardly with an additional weight on sex organs, which stands additionally exemplified when she says: “The weight of my breasts seemed to be crushing me. My private part was only a wound, the soul's wound, showing through” (Das 104). Her over-exposure in this way seems disgusting, about which Vimala Rao remarks “In life

such self-exposure is suicidal, in art it is unpardonably boring” (Rao 96). Thus, vulgarism is the most commanding component of the book and the author appears to be fixated on sexuality, which as a topic comes convenient to her. She most likely acquired this quality from her amazing uncle, who composed a book on sex entitled, 'Rati Samrajya' which “was an academic study based on the writings of Havelock Ellis and the Indian sexologists” (Das 23).

Aside from being disgusting, the author is additionally indiscernible in her portrayal, which she unwarrantedly attempts to enhance with hot flavors, in light of on her dream than reality. Subsequently, relating the episodes of her school days she tells about her uneven relationship at 14 years old with one of her instructors, and with an understudy chief much prior. She likewise alludes to her moment fascination towards a woman educator and perspectives even the affection and feelings of a senior female accomplice in the inn as a lesbian headway. It shows that directly from the earliest starting point the author is fixated on sexuality, which delivers her pretended blamelessness silly that until her wedding night she didn't have any information as to “what went on between men and women in the process of procreation” (Das 25). Likewise, her ignorance of the advent of menses and her depiction of the first menstrual experience in a crude way is equally absurd and hypocritical (Das 61), all the more especially, taking into account the way that her mom had purportedly instructed her to acknowledge her adolescence and her menstrual cycle, as an inescapable marvel for reproduction. Likewise, the purported ruthless assault by her eventual spouse during one of his pre-commitment gatherings additionally is by all accounts very misrepresented, she narrates, “Before I left for Calcutta, my relative (her future husband) pushed me into a dark corner behind a door and kissed me sloppily near my mouth. He crushed my breasts with his thick fingers. I felt hurt and humiliated.” (Das 82) She additionally reviews that whenever when he comes to Calcutta at the greeting of her dad, while driving home from the air terminal to the entertainment of the driver he “pressed my fingers amorously and asked if I had changed” (Das 83) Moreover, he additionally purportedly boasts “of the sexual exploits he shared with some of the maidservants in his house in Malabar” (Das 84). Additionally, on a prior event he is likewise asserted to have alluded to “homosexuality with frankness” and as a normal affair (81). Mrs. Das charges that the behavior of her life partner bothered her lot, as she has anticipated that he should be as liberal as her parents “to take me in his arms and stroke my face, my hair, my hands and whisper loving words... I wanted conversation, companionship and warmth. Sex was far from my thoughts. I had hoped that he

would remove with one sweep of his benign arms, the loneliness of my life” (Das 84). She again accuses Mr. Das of surprising her on the wedding night “by the extreme brutality of the attack...with my heart palpitating wildly I begged him to think of God” (Das 89). Nevertheless, her husband, as she confides, doesn’t succeed in consummating the marriage; and though he repeatedly tries to hurt her, she is able to remain “a virgin for nearly a fortnight after... marriage” (Das 90). It, in any case, looks odd to accept that a man, who permits his better half to keep her supposed virginity flawless for such a long time despite the fact that offering a typical space to her, could truly be merciless and forceful. Thus, regardless of her solid influences, neither her slurry words criticized her better half, nor her case, that at the hour of marriage she was very blameless and knew nothing what marriage was about, can be taken to be valid.

The above subtleties obviously mirror that Mrs. Das is upset with her better half from the earliest starting point, which it is accepted and was an instance of scorn from the start sight. She, hence, laments that her marriage was settled by her folks singularly, where she had all the earmarks of being a manikin, the strings of which being held immovably by her parents... she wasn't given a free decision to choose an ideal lover. She also regrets for being treated as if she “was burden and a responsibility neither (her) parents nor my grandmother could put up with for long” (Das 82). She additionally advises regarding how severe she feels for her marriage with Mr. Das that once when her dad calmly asks for what good reason she looks so slight and has not put on weight after marriage she turns upset, “I wished then to cry and to tell him that he had miscalculated and that I ought not to have married the one I did, but I could not bring myself to hurt him” (Das 91). It is likewise out of sheer predisposition that she takes all the pre-marriage boastings of her significant other about his manly adventures all over worth and structures a negative supposition against him, leveling on their premise genuine accusations against him of indecency, similar to homosexuality and adultery. She, in any case, surrenders that being truly immature at the hour of marriage and not prepared for profiting marital ecstasy demonstrates a shame to her better half, as he is a veteran in the boisterous methods of sex which he had rehearsed with the house cleaners who worked for his family. Besides, she also accuses her husband that he marries her not for love, but for her “social status and the possibility of financial gain” (Das 95).

It, notwithstanding, gives the idea that Mrs. Das experiences such a feeling of inadequacy and is desirous even towards her house keeper workers, whom she finds physical more delightful

than her, as she says, "I was slight, and my swollen bosoms took after a papaya tree. The amount more curvy were my maidservants. Indeed, at all an incredible phases Mrs. Das appears to convey an inclination that she is without a sexual intrigue, in the adolescence for her dull composition, after marriage for her youthful age and further down the road for her unexpected frailty. By the by, it might be a ploy utilized by Mrs. Das intentionally to extend herself as a survivor of what she calls as "a young man's carnal hunger" (Das 90). Or something bad might happen, it might be treated as a vain endeavor on her part to vindicate her guiltlessness in an offer to look for a justification for her numerous sexual undertakings, in this way legitimizing her ethical degeneration, proclaiming completely that distressed by the lead of her better half she is compelled to search for adoration outside the 'legitimate circle' and that "I made up my mind to be unfaithful to him at least physically" (Das 95).

True to her above shameless resolve, Mrs. Das turns so desperate for love that she even goes to the extent of asking her maid-servant to hire a young and handsome brick-layer, then working in her father's under construction house, by paying him gratifications in gold coin (Das 95). She likewise trusts that she excitedly surrenders to the adulation of one of her cousins and permits him to snatch her and kiss her, as right then and there she is to such an extent "ready for love and ripe for a sexual banquet" (Das 95-96). She really turns into a man-hunter, as she herself says, "...like alms looking for a begging bowl was my love which only sought for it a receptacle" (Das 118). Notwithstanding, her obscene ways delivers her helpless against the degree that even an outsider, in intrigue with her confided in house keeper, when picks up passage direct into her room and even attempts to submit assault. Inquisitively, Mrs. Das herself later confirms the veracity of the above occurrence, saying, "It was not a creation of my imagination. It actually happened. The ayah was bribed. I remember how miserable I had felt" (Kaur 164). Thusly, the rundown of her darlings holds growing to the degree that it turns out to be well near troublesome in any event, for her to check their names, similarly as except for one Carlo she depicts all others of them just by their callings, or different physical imprints, like 'bricklayer', 'grey-eyed man', 'the man with a tattoo between his eyes', 'the aged man', 'the intelligent man', 'the old and stout man', etc. In one of her articles Mrs. Das even goes to the extent of favouring the revival of polyandry of the Mahabharata days, saying, "I plead for the return of a social order that allowed a woman to have more than one husband if she so desired". (Eve's Weekly, May 1972). Be that as it may, subsequent upon her diverse unlawful sexual

involvements and love undertakings she gains an awful name and is charged for bargaining the name of her family, as Suresh Kohli remarks, "...one cannot think of any woman, more so an Indian woman, who would invite abuses, negative criticism and hatred and bring an aura of eroticism around her purely to create sensation-not even the strongest protagonist of women's liberation." (India Today, March 31, 1976)

Apparently Mrs. Das in the long run understands her error of being so strange in delineating her sensuality, as she says, "My articles on free love had titillated many. So I continued to get phone calls from men who wanted to proposition me" and tries to explain it away, saying, "It was so obvious that I painted a wrong image. I was never a nymphomaniac. Sex did not interest me except as a gift I could grant to my husband" (Das 192). Strengthening her protection she additionally proclaims that "Not even Mrs. Grundy would have found fault with my morals" (Das 202) Plus, to remain herself clean she loads a wide range of trash on her better half as though he is a dumping ground. It, notwithstanding, gives the idea that the different charges she levels against him, with respect to being coldblooded egotistical and obscene, are misrepresented, as she herself is by all accounts negating them at a few spots in the book by commending him for his so numerous great characteristics. Likewise, she herself depicts him as a savvy man who could think upon abstract illuminating presences like Aldous Huxley and Bertrand Russell without hardly lifting a finger, however she later deprecates it saying that it "was not a major accomplishment" (Das 83). Now and again, she shows her most extreme worry for the honor of her better half, concerning case once when Mr. Das is irritated by his supervisor in the work place; she turns enraged and requests that he leave instead of confronting humiliations. Notwithstanding, simultaneously she depicts him as a powerless man, who has no fearlessness to confront his abuser, despite the fact that he is genuinely more vulnerable than him, as she sarcastically says, "My husband when he does not stoop stands six feet without his shoes, whereas the bully who made him lose his self-confidence was a tiny marionette of a man who had the jerky movement of a tin soldier" (Das 195). Moreover, it likewise looks secret that even while giving her shock transparently for her significant other, she needs him generally to unite behind her, urging and complimenting paying little mind to his bustling timetable in the workplace. Then again, she regards her own obligations towards him to have been completely released distinctly by permitting him a physical access. Be that as it may, bearing every one of her wrongdoings and blistering remarks against his lead Mr. Das keeps on cherishing his better

half fervently, dealing with every one of her needs and going to upon her mindfully during her regular ailments, however even in that she attempts to find desire that excessively “loud and savage” (Das 111-112). Nevertheless, he still adopts a forgiving stance towards his wife and ignores all her ignominious deeds (Das 117-118). He likewise confides in her completely and consistently attempts to pacify her to the degree of permitting her even to appreciate the company of outsiders, despite the fact that he realizes that she frequently abuses it, deceiving the trust rested in her. Regardless, she remains at any point unhappy with her better half, who she says "was inundated in his office-work, and after work there was the supper, trailed by sex" with no time “to see the sea or the dark buffaloes of the slopes” (Das 41). It, in fact, lends further confidence to the hypothesis that Mr. Das has dislike for her significant other from the very beginning, as he is basically unique in relation to her in nature and isn't a man she had always wanted, as while he “always gave precedence to his office work over anything else, she was interested only in the fascinating world of love and sex” (Tiwari 182).

Thus, to adulterate all her affection undertakings, Mrs. Das even goes to the degree of considering her better half exclusively liable for urging her to make the book profoundly 'thrilling and provocative'. It is very inquisitive that Dwivedi, who legitimizes the sexual distortions of the author on the double additionally acknowledges her guard, alleging that “when she speaks of love outside marriage, she does not really advocate for infidelity and adultery, but merely searches for a kind of man-woman relationship which should guarantee both love and security to a woman” (Dwivedi 3). Nonetheless, Mrs. Das maybe still discovers her protection powerless and inadequate, so she attempts to perplex her romantic tales, anticipating her last lover even as the epitome of Lord Krishna, the supplier of general love and security. She further cases that lone he who goes to Mathura and neglects to come back to his Radha “could be an ideal lover for her” (Das 191). She even attempts to give her story an otherworldly shade by portraying the physical magnificence as transient. She additionally alludes to such powerful components as god, life and passing. Clearly, it is considering such confounding cases that pundits like Iqbal Kaur have been driven into treating Mrs. Das as a paragon of prudence and the mouthpiece of the enduring womanhood, accepting that all the grimy stories described by her in the principal individual are not her own but rather have a place with another person. It, be that as it may, renders the account to get confused at numerous spots. It likewise upsets the cadence of the book to such an extent it neglects to introduce the episodes in an efficient way and

furthermore needs availability. It additionally experiences inward logical inconsistencies and pointless misrepresentations, and its language at numerous events is likewise disgusting and dirty. Besides, it additionally doesn't address any social concerns legitimately, or serves any women's activist reason, yet it tends to ladies of various shades in an entirely uncharitable term, portraying maidservants as wicked colleagues capable in gossip mongering, coquetry and tease prepared to bargain their excellence effectively, and hails dominant part of the city-abiding ladies as two-timing, which is surely an extremely clearing comment, the avocation of which escapes perception. Notwithstanding all these paradoxes the poet hails the book as her most satisfying literary adventure, saying: "This book has cost me many things that I held dear but I do not for a moment regret having written it. I have written several books in my life time, but none of them provided the pleasure the writing of *My Story* has given me" (Das v) Inquisitively, since the book before being distributed is serialized in a mainstream Malayali journal and later in English in *The Current Weekly*, Bombay (Jan. to Dec. 1974), it bears the author a chance to know the audiences' responses a little bit at a time and to adjust its substance in like manner to save her from a badly arranged circumstance.

Nonetheless, the above logical inconsistencies render the book needing in being viewed as a life account, especially notwithstanding the writer's own case that the principle motivation behind composing the book has been to earn money, suggesting subsequently that different sensual scenes portrayed in a disgusting language have been purposely made to make the book famous among the youthful and artless readers to upgrade its marketability. However, as a result of the purposeful incorporation of nonexistent, refuse and ludicrous material as the essayist's clarifications to her different love-desire stories, the nonexclusive character of the book turns out to be very obscure, which miserably impedes its case to a self-portrayal and gives it the tint of a fiction, to consider it a personal novel. Similarly, Nair also believes that "*My Story* is not an autobiography in the conventional sense; it is an imaginative and fanciful rendering of certain autobiographical experiences that affected the poet's growth from childhood to maturity, from innocence to its loss" (Nair 103). It is perhaps taking into account this that Nair accepts that the book isn't truly a collection of memoirs and that the author has utilized the confession mode, as she discovers it fairly helpful to portray her love encounters and its traps to feature "the agonies and pressures of the cutting edge modern Indian woman. Nonetheless, after a cautious examination of the book and the material on record it tends to be securely derived that the

fundamental spread out and structure of *My Story* is basically self-portraying, wherein the main events in the life of the author, her own qualities and desires, her family foundation, her adoration, desire fixations, her complete self-exposure, her conjugal disunity and extra-conjugal longings, and so forth which however gains her an awful name, welcoming the wrath of her companions and family members have been related genuinely. Apparently the author has intentionally attempted to perplex the story to misdirect the readers in an offer to spare her from unsavory and adverse comments about her own life from different quarters, in any case the status of *My Story* as a life account despite everything remains completely intact.

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