

My Story by Kamala Das: A Study

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By

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Arshitha S

Certificate

This is to certify that this project entitled *My Story by Kamala Das: A Study* is a record of research work carried out by **Ms Arshitha S** under my supervision and guidance in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English and History submitted to the University of Calicut.

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I, **Arshitha S** hereby declare that this project entitled ***My Story by Kamala Das: A Study*** submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in English and History, is a research work done by me under the supervision and guidance of **Miss. Nahna Kamarudheen V**, Assistant Professor Department of English and History, Christ college (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda.

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Contents

Chapter number	Contents	Page Number
	Introduction	1 - 3
Chapter - 1	Autobiography	4 – 8
Chapter - 2	The Woman Writer Kamala Das	9 – 15
Chapter - 3	Analysis My Story	16 – 25
	Conclusion	26 – 27
	Work Cited	28

Introduction

Kamala Das is one of the most considerable Indian women poets writing in English today. She was born on March 31, 1934 at punnayurkulam, a village in South Malabar, Kerala. She was educated both Kerala and Calcutta. Her long stay in Calcutta during her childhood brought her in close contact with the English language. Her love of poetry began at an early age through the influence of her great uncle, Nalapat Narayana Menon, a prominent writer. Das remembers watching him “work from morning till night” and thinking that he had “a blissful life “. Das was also deeply affected by the poetry of her mother Nalapat Balamani Amma, the sacred writing kept by the matriarchal community of Nayars. She was privately educated until the age of fifteen when she was married to k. Madhav Das. She grew up in an intellectual and literary background. Her felicity with words found expression in every literary form fiction, the short story, poetry and journalistic articles. Poetry comes to her effortlessly and in later life she had only to decide the medium of its expression. Most modern Indian writer in English have gone through English medium schools and are degree holder some of them have received education the west and have the experience of prolonged stay either in England or U. S. A kamala Das is an exception. She has not gone to a university or taken a degree as her famous contemporaries have done.

Das added thirty novels in Malayalam language and 3 anthologies of poetry into Indian literature. She got her early education at home and has secured high place in Malayalam literature because she has been writing poetry since her youth. She received some famous awards for her contribution to Malayalam as well as English literature. She was awarded with the poetry award for the Asian PEN anthology in 1964, the Kerala sahitya academy award for the best collection of short story in Malayalam. She was a nominee for the Noble prize in 1984, Kamal

Das has produced five volumes of poetry in English: *summer in Calcutta* (1965), *The descendants* (1967), *The old playhouse and other poem* (1973), *Tonight, This savage Rite* (1979) and *collected poems, volume* (1984). It was her shift from the sheltered life of the village to the first paced, mechanical life of the city that sparked off her poetic utterance, she spent her childhood and early of Calcutta where her father occupied a managerial post in a British company. Her first collection, *summer in Calcutta* (1965). her poetry evokes an anxious passionate state of mind where memory and desire and mingle. K Madhav Das at the tender age of fifteen. Like her parents, kamala Das also excelled in writing. However, she did not start writing professionally till she was married and became a mother. She is famous for her many Malayalam short stories as well as several poems written in English. The prime feature of kamala's poetry was the consent attention to female sexual life. The keralite is recognized as of the foremost poetesses of India. She is also a syndicated columnist. In 1999, she converted from Hinduism to Islam and changed her name to kamala suraiya. some of her prominent works in Malayalam include *mathilukal*, *Narichirukalparakkumpol*, *Manasi*, *Balyakalasmaranakal*, *Neermathalam poothakalam* and *ottavadipatha*. But to the non-Malayalee Kamala Das is known because of her English poetry. The most famous among them are *summer in Calcutta*, *Alphabet of the lust*, *The Descendants*, *old play House* and *only the soul known How to sing*. She was awarded the Asian poetry prize for her anthology *the siren's* in 1964. And the Kent's Award for *summer in Calcutta* in 1965. in 1969, her short story, *Thanuppu* was adjudged as the best by the Kerala sahitya academy. Her book on childhood memories *Neermathalam poothakalam* bagged the vayalar Award in 1997. She also won the *chimanlall* award for fearless journalism. She functioned as the poetry editor of the illustrated weekly of India for one year, from 1971-72.

The first chapter discuss about the term autobiography. The second chapter deals with Kamala Das's *My story* as a "woman's tale of woe" as a story of a woman's loneliness, and as an anguish of a subaltern. The third chapter talks about the famous writer Kamala Das's autobiography *My story*. Kamala Das's autobiography *Enthe Kadha* is written in Malayalam. The English version, *My story* translated by the author herself.

CHAPTER -1

Autobiography

The first chapter discuss about the term autobiography means the biography of oneself narrated by oneself. Autobiographical works can take many forms, from the intimate writing made during life that were not necessarily intended for publication (including letters, diaries, journal, memories, and reminiscences) to a formal book length autobiography. Formal autobiographies offer a special kind of biographical truth. A life, reshaped by recollection, with all of recollection's conscious and unconscious omission and distortions. The novelist *Graham Greene* said that, for this reason, an autobiography is only "a sort of life" and used the phrase as the title for his own autobiography (1971).

Autobiography now has the potential to be the text of the oppressed, the displaced, forging a right to speak both for and beyond the individual. People, in a position of powerlessness women, black people have more than begun to insert themselves into the culture via the autobiography, via the assertion of the personal voice. The idea that the autobiography can become, the text of the oppressed articulating through one person's experience an experience which may be representative of a particular marginalized group is an important one autobiography becomes both a way of testifying to oppression and empowering the subject through their culture inscription and recognition. An autobiography is the life sketch of a person written by that person himself or herself. The word auto means 'self'. Therefore, autobiography contains all the elements of a biography but composed or narrated by the author himself. He / She may write on their own or may hire ghostwriters to write for them. An autobiography resents the narrator's character sketch, the place where he is born and brought up, his education, work,

life experiences, challenges, and achievements. This may include events and stories of his childhood, teenage, and adulthood. There are but few and scattered examples of autobiographical literature in antiquity and the middle Ages. In the 2nd century BCE the Chinese classical historians *Qian* included a brief account of himself in the *shiji* (“Historical Records”). It may be stretching a point to include, from the 1st century BCE, the letters of *Cicero* (or, in the early Christian era, the letters of *saint Paul*), and *Julius Caesar’s* commentaries tell little about Caesar, though they present a masterly picture of the conquest of Gaul and the operations of the Roman military machine at its most efficient. But *saint Augustine’s confession*, written about 400 CE, stands out as unique: though Augustine put Christianity at the center of his description of his own life to be merely incidental, he produced a powerful personal account, stretching from youth to adulthood, of his religious conversion.

An autobiography may be placed into one of four very broad types: thematic, religious, intellectual, and fictionalized. The first grouping including books with such diverse purposes as *The Americanization of Edward Bok* (1920) and *Adolf Hitler’s Mein Kampf* (1925, 1927). Religious autobiography claims a number of great works, ranging from Augustine and Kemp to the autobiographical chapters of *Thomas Carlyle’s Sartor Resartus* and *John Henry Cardinal Newman’s Apologia* in the 19th century. That century and the early 20th saw the creation of several intellectual autobiographies, including the severely analytical *Autobiography* of the philosopher *John Stuart Mill* and *the Education of Henry Adams*. Finally, somewhat analogous to the novel as biography is the autobiography thinly disguised as, or transformed into, the novel. This group includes such works as Samuel Butler’s *The Way of All Flesh*, James Joyce’s

A portrait of the artist as a young man, George Santayana's *The last puritan* and the novels of Thomas Wolfe. Yet in all of these works can be detected elements of all four types: the most outstanding autobiographies often ride roughshod over these distinctions.

The difference between biography and autobiography are discussed in details in the following points: Biography is a detailed account of a person's life written by someone else, while an autobiography is written by the subject themselves. Biography can be written with (authorised) or without permission from the person/heir's concerned. Therefore, there are chances of factual mistakes in the information. On the other hand, autobiographies are self-written and therefore doesn't require any authorization. Biographies contain information that is collected over a period of time from different sources and thus, it projects a different outlook to the readers. On the other hand, autobiographies are written by the subject themselves, therefore, the writer presents the facts and his thinking in his own way, thus providing an overall narrow and biased perspective to the readers. In an autobiography, the author uses the first narrative like I, me, we, he, she, etc. This, in, turn, makes an intimate connection between the author and the reader since the reader experiences various aspects as if he/she is in that time period. As opposed a biography is from a third person's view and is much less intimate. A biography, also called a bio, is a nonfiction piece of work giving an objective account of a person's life. The main difference a biography vs. an autobiography is that the author of a biography is not the subject. Biographies include details of key events that shaped the subject's life, and information about their birthplace, education, work, and relationships. Biographers use a number of research sources, including interviews, letters, diaries, photographs, essays, references books, and newspapers. While a biography is usually in the written form, it can be produced in other formats

such as music composition or film.

An autobiography is the story of a person's life written by that person. Because the author is also the main character of the story, autobiographies are written in the first person. The purpose of an autobiography is to portray the life experiences and achievements of the author. Therefore, most autobiographies are written later in the subject's life. They often begin during early childhood and chronologically detail key events throughout their life. Autobiographies usually include information about where a person was born and brought up, their education, career, life experiences, the challenges they faced, and their key achievements. One of the main differences between an autobiography vs. a biography is that autobiographies tend to be more subjective. That's because they are written by the subject, and present the facts based on their own memories of a specific situation, which can be biased. The difference between a memoir vs. an autobiography is that a *memoir* focuses on reflection and establishing an emotional connection, rather than simply presenting the facts around their life. The author uses their personal knowledge to tell an intimate and emotional story about the private or public happenings in their life. The topic is intentionally focused and does not include biographical or chronological aspects of the author's life unless they are meaningful and relevant to the story is a famous memoir *Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou.

Kamala Das is one of most considerable Indian women poets writing in English today. She was born on March 31, 1934 at punnayurkulam, a village in south Malabar, Kerala. She was educated both Kerala and Calcutta. Her long stay in Calcutta during her childhood brought her in close contact with the English language. Her love poetry began at an early age through the

influence of her great uncle, Nalapat Narayana Menon, a prominent writer. Das remembers watching him “work from morning till night “and thinking that he had “a blissful life “. Das was also deeply affected by the poetry of her mother, Nalapat Balamani Amma, the sacred writing kept by the matriarchal community of Nayers. She was privately educated until the age of fifteen when she was 16 when her first son was born says that she “was mature enough to be a mother only when my third child was born “. She falls from the illustrious Nalapat family, daughter of the well-know poet and jnanpith award winner, Balamani Amma, and Matrubhoomi director V.M.Nair. She grew up in an intellectual and literary background. Her felicity with words found expression in every literary form fiction, the short story, poetry and journalistic articles. Poetry comes to her effortlessly and in later life she had only to decide the medium of its expression.

Chapter 2

The woman writer Kamala Das

The second chapter deals with Kamala Das's *My story* as seen by a few as a '*women's tale of woe*' as a story of a women's loneliness and as an anguish of a subaltern. The current paper deals with the aim of all women are to feel better and understanding of life, especially that of women's inward experience. From them, some women are becoming more a poet, a feminist and a confession list like Kamala Das and Sylvia Plath. In their poetry, Women's problems need a different lens and different semantic set to express women truly. Being women and love poets, they regret that critics do not realize the values of her poetry. They take boldness to stand against the odds of scandal indignity, and character assassination. They are fighting as liberated women and creative writer. It is undeniable that all the works of Kamala Das have stamp of them to identify themselves as feminine among the male society with their liberated spirit. Because they examine more boldly that what a man would do, the pangs and frustrations of love, from her various profoundly personal and subtly physical angles.

The poetry of Kamala Das extents our understanding of life, especially that of women's inward experience. She is more a poet, a feminist and a confession poet than any other poets. In her poetry, women's problems need a different lens and different semantic set to express women truly. Being a women and love poet, kamala das regrets that critics do not realize the values of her poetry. But Kamala Das takes boldness to stand against the odds of scandal indignity, and character assassination. She is a liberated women and a creative writer. It is undeniable that all the works of Das have stamp of her to identify herself and her liberated spirit. She was fighting

for her life from the bondage of social values and morals which had been suppressing for a longtime. She seems to be a solitary visionary standing all alone and aloof like a feminine Columbus in the creative discovery of her passionate self. Both Kamala Das life and works are so controversial and unconventional. She is as to invite many writers to follow her style to telling truth, both her poetic version and her personal life, perhaps, even sensationalistic. Because she examines more boldly that what a man would do, the pangs and frustrations of love, from her various profoundly personal and subtly physical angles. Poems are her theatres through which she exposes her psychic geography, and her female imagination is projected from frustrated love which the poetess bitterly tasted. So she is in a state to express her insignificance in her family such as the male.

In The “Old Play house” she says that her family members insisted that she herself dress in sarees, be a girl, be a wife, be embroiderer, be cook, be a quarreler with servants and fit in all and she was not permitted to sit in anywhere like on walls or peep in through our lace-draped windows, she was insisted to be Amy or be kamala or better still, be Madhavakutty for this. She dominated that It is time to choose a role in her works. From these, she could understand a woman but a stoic and not a human being. She was born for having a role differently treated as servant for the male. Kamala Das expresses her hat redness for sexual indulgence in clear terms. In “Gino”she says most bitterly: You will perish from his kiss, he said, as one must surely die, when bitten by a krait who fills The bloodstream with its accused essence. I was quiet; For once my tongue had failed in my mouth. The poems of kamala Das are a call to every Indian woman begged down for centuries by age-old customs and time-honored conventions, to the shake of

her, docility and to fight against social injustice against her gender. The poems of kamala Das are to induce women her poems “The End of Spring”, “To Early The Autumn Sights”, “Visitors To The Sea Punishment in Kinder garden”, “ The Siesta”, “My Morning Tongue”, etc., these deal with love theme and the poetess personal frustrations and disillusionments. The following poems were written to express the poetess love feelings: “The Descendants”, “The Invitations”, “Composition”, “Shut Out That Moon”, “Neutral Tones”, “The Suicide”, “A Request”, “The Substitute”, “The Ferns”, “Convicts”, “The Looking Glass”, and etc., Kamala Das” most of the poems breathe an air of love, amorousness, and sexuality.

When she even was at the age of 19, suffered a nerves breakdown as a neglected wife, and she was commanded to live all alone in a closed room with sunshine peeping through a window. She fell seriously ill and was removed to Malabar, where her grandmother’s affection care could cure her. “In My Grandmother’s House” she remembers this house as a source of great comfort abounding in love for her. K.N.Daruwala writes, “Kamala Das is a poet of love and pain, one establishing the other through a near neurotic world. There is an all- pervasive sense of hurt throughout love the lazy animal hungers of the flush; hurt and humiliation are the warp and wool of her poetic fabric. She seldom ventures outside this personal world ...”

Kamala Das is treated as no more than domesticated woman who is required to look after his house and children and attend to his whims and freaks. She is aware of the fact; and complaints; you called me wife; I was thought to break saccharine into your tea and to offer at the right moment the vitamins cowering. Beneath your monstrous ego I ate the magic loaf and

become a dwarf. I lost my will and reason to all questions I mumbled incoherent replies. The summer begins to fall. She reverts the complaint again and again, and in the poem. The Stone Age' she utters aloud thus. "Fond husband ancient settler in the mind, Old fat spider, wearing webs of debridement. Be kind you turned me into a bird of stone, granite Dove "Her helplessness is complete here, and she urges her unfeeling husband to „be kind“ and not treat her as a mere object of pleasure and life lessons. But she is even stung by the worthless life partner Men may be physically stronger than women, but that does not mean that they should use this supremacy to crush the emotions of women. Human relationship should not suffer due to male physical superiority on account of this strength; men consider that women are inferior and hence should be subservient and submissive. Kamala Das is a confessional poet speaking out her private experience with astonishing and brutal frankness that is unheard of in Indian women. Probably, we have not yet another Indian poet, whether in English or any other language, to write so candidly and poignantly, bringing out her inner urges so originally. Kamala Das is a feminist fighting to liberate women from the bondage of conventional social values and morals which had been suppressing them in her country for a long time. Kamala Das weaves poems in original unpremeditated, automatic and aesthetic construct of sounds and symbols.

In her poem, kamala Das goes out to seek love outside the orbit of marriage in her inner longing is fresh and new experience of love, but other times, she seems to love her intensely in certain moods and movements. The upper and superior attitude of men is the root cause of female dissatisfaction. Women have suffered in silence and are still suffering in silence, waiting patiently for the day to come when they will be treated with respect and love in true sense.

Women all over the world are fighting for recognition and survival. On the other hand women have been exploited by men in all ages. From Hardy to Hemmingway, the desirable woman, portrayed is one who is passive and subservient. In Hemming way fiction, the protagonist claims male superiority, and enjoys masculine freedom. It is a man's world, where a woman is just "a good thing to have in reserve". Women are indeed living at the mercy of men. At present a women's existence on the man who came into her life, women in general feel insecure; they face utter humiliation when dowry system is imposed upon them. Sylvia Plath's and Kamala Das's heroine are merely women portraying like a dog, doll and etc. by these characteristics, the entire women do not get liberty living under the control of men and shedding tears would not be stopped. Some women want to live with their husband and their family members even though they had given a lot of troublesome to women. But, Kamala Das heroine Sheela of "The Scandal Trees" easily rejects her husband's help to live in the world and proved that she can live without his help. So she has gone away from the domestic circumstances. Being an Indian woman with her traditional background of social taboos and cultural barriers even to be a poet in her tongue is difficult. The Indian ethos generally stifles a woman from a free expression of her consciousness. But kamala das is a Indian woman poet, writing poetry in English and writing in Malayalam, so uninhibitedly on forbidden subjects in the Indian context. She is not only a woman poet in English as far as her love poetry is concerned. As a poet of love, she examines more boldly than what a man would do, the pangs and frustrations of love, from her various profoundly personal and subtly physical angles.

Kamala Das is a revolutionary, and she challenges established traditional and conventions. By her bold confession and radical attitude, kamala Das comes out as a western oriented Indian woman coming to grips with her modern existence but in the background of her Hindu tradition. Kamala Das is an authentic voice expressing the female born out of felt experiencing and true involvement. Her poetry, through rooted in her personal crisis, private humiliation and failures, reflects the emotional, psychological and social crisis experienced by women at large. In “The Flag” the poet registers her note of protest against the false pride of the Indian tri-color when beneath it sleep the poor on wet pavements with no cloths to cover their naked bodies. The poem also brings to light the poverty of women which had forced them to sell their flesh. R. C. Shukla “Commerce”, Our Life is a Drama of Acts Five and Suresh Nath talk of human psychology exhibiting the reality of man-woman relationship so called extra-marital relationship. Few of his poems depict the frailty of woman, their role in extra-marital relationship and commercialization of their charms. Moraldis integration in the contemporary society worries him. These poets have talked of human suffering- their pains and helplessness. They are social conscious poets. Their poetry carries a sense of dissatisfaction, despair, frustration and anguish. Their poetry is an outpouring of their longings and yearnings. Their greatest achievement lies in their ability to articulate human experiences and emotions.

In “Advice to fellow-swimmers” Kamala Das rumbled arguing for women and being even a woman to overcome from the ravel from her life. “When you learn to swim Do not enter a river that has no ocean To flow into, one ignorant of destinations And knowing only the flowing as its destiny Like the weary rivers of the blood That bears the sum of ancient memories But go

swim in the sea Go swim in the great blue ocean...” (Ramachandra Nair) From these, kamala Das recalls her past life from the revocable poet lines in the beech side where she razed the notion of the protest and realized the connection of her past life and revives by herself. Her nomadic mind again and again likes to survive in her irreproachable rut. The vision of critics in Honor, kamala Das was maimed by the continuous and sexual exploitation from the Nair’s. she frankly says that she was called as the Old Cattle is a prose poem of eight a strong long widening poetic lines which identifies the poet “drawn to the slaughter house” Kamala Das has achieved the most fame. She is a major poet in her performance, and the other poets do not possess the individuality of her achieved. In fact, many other contemporary Indian poets have sung songs in honor of the genders’ love and expectations in her life- such poets as Shiv K.Kumar, Pritish Nandy, Nissim Ezekiel, R.Parthasarathy, Jayanta Mahapatra and A.K. Ramanujan- but in her emotional sweep and lyrical rapture Kamala Das surpasses them all. The gender and discrimination is citadel where her personal cares and anxieties, her own dilemmas and predicaments, are safely anchored in her poems.

Chapter 3

Analysis My Story

The second chapter talks about the famous writer Kamala Das's autobiography *My story*. *My story* was first serialized in a Malayalam journal and was later translated and serialized in English weekly. This deliberately contrived fantasy veiled in the form of an outspoken autobiography earned Kamala Das a dubious reputation among the orthodox. She realized this too and towards the close of the serial wrote. It was obvious to me that I had painted of myself a wrong image. "There is a basic story which kamala Das tells about herself in her poetry and autobiography, *my story* ". Raised in the warmth of a tight -knit Kerala matrilineal society. She was uprooted when her father moved to Calcutta. For a time she attended a catholic boarding school and was suddenly at a young age married to a cousin, for whom she apparently had little affection, while he was too preoccupied with his career to expect from his young wife than a cook and sexual partner. Left by herself as she and her husband moved home in accordance with his job, rebellious, angry and confused, Das turned to others for affection, Her husband's willingness to let her have her sexual experiences was a further blow to her ego. Her Balyakala samarankal (childhood memories) is unmatched in brilliance.

"Her autobiographical work, *my story* which came out in 1976, demolished traditional sexual barriers by dealing in female sexuality". For the first time, perhaps in the history of women's writing in India the "*love needs* "or unsatisfied sexual yearning of women were delineated, That a women writer could dare to speak in this Kerala psyche could not easily countenance. Indeed, the reaction that her work evoked locally made kamala Das feel rejected

and alienated. The need for the woman write to express her is fore grounded by major critics. In their introduction to a collection of feminist essays published in 1987 Gail Chester and Sigrid Nielsen declare writing plays a vital role in forming our perceptions of our lives as women, in working out our feminist views and in communicating them to others. Only by writing an expression could the woman writer succeed in breaking down existing social power structures and create a place for herself in the world masculine hierarchies. By writing the self the woman writer could challenge accepted notion of the female. The feeling of social responsibility in reconstructing her social role gave the woman writer courage and confidence. An autobiography mode itself became popular and an accepted means for the woman writer to explore her personal identity. By verbalizing, the woman writer was attempting a breaking up of the power structure of a hitherto acceptable patriarchal discourse. Linda Anderson theorizes upon this aspect of women's autobiographical discourse. It is necessary to take in to account the fact that the woman who attempts to write herself is engaged by the very nature of that activity itself in rewriting the stories that already exist about herself she is violating an important cultural construction of her femininity as passive or hidden. She is resisting or changing what is known about her. Her place within culture, the place from which she writes is produced by difference and produces difference. Kamala Das's good intentions were deliberately misunderstood not only by male critics but by women including her relatives. Her very act of defining female space was taken to be a threat to male citadel. This resulted in severe critical dissent and adverse publicity not only by men but also by women. She had to withdraw her stand and herself as a consequence. Qualities which could have been considered as great and admired if the writer wore to be male. But since my story came out of the pen of kamala Das her forthrightness and

expressiveness became a curse to her which, would have been lauded had the writer been male. These qualities were considered as her drawback.

The writer who had defined female space became diffident and unsure of herself. Her intrinsic worth gave her agony for life. As a result of this she was compelled to give explanation for her work. In preface to my story she writes, The doctor thought that writing would distract my mind from the fear of a sudden death, and besides there were all the hospital bills to be taken care of kamala Das's insecurity and fear of social disgrace made her write my story. Instead of gaining popularity after writing the biography, the critics made her lick the dust. What Bruce king has elsewhere said above that kamala Das's aim is to assert, dominate and conquer becomes a futile gesture of kamala das. Kamala Das encountered the public and social disparagement because of her my story. She is happy and bold to face what comes after her publication. 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. Kamala Das's views expressed in the passage quoted above indicate her sincerity and happiness over the accomplishment of her creative work.

The critics in general and society in particular consider her confession as subversive and insurgent when she write sincerely about what are her feelings about the first night with her husband, her husband and his friends homosexuality her sexual experience with lovers out of wedlock, her views about her parents, her desire for marrying a young man of her choice when she fell in love with his personality even her hatred for city life and her love for the village life her sympathetic attitude towards labourers, finally her frank views about sex and love, her hatred

for people who considered her as nymphomaniac and her love for her grandmother and her reminiscences about her life in kindergarten her experiences in boarding school are linked closely between the incidents in her life with the origin of the poems. This fact belies T.S Eliot's belief that poetry arises not out of the personal experiences of the poet's life. But out of the storehouse of the poet's mind: The poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images which remain there until all the particles which can write to form a new compound are present together ... the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes ! Therefore, T.S.Eliot says, "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion"; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality " Ideal with Kamala Das's experience of her first night and with the works of Kamala Das vis-a-vis her *My Story*. The feminine psyche's obsession with sex is perverted because of the inherent urge for spiritual fulfillment in love through the medium of sex. As feminist rebel against the conventional marriage, she writes in the article 'The Sham of a Marriage' (Blitz):" I am thoroughly disappointed with my marriage and everybody else's marriage is where. The ideal marriage, mental cripples cling on to each other until death. "Married at the age of fifteen, and finding herself tied to a hollow relationship which she could not untie, Kamala Da's story, despite its sensationalism, seems partly contrived. Marriage did not offer her any solace from loneliness. She faced in her married life a male-oriented world of sex and lust. It was customary for the much older husband to give his bride a rude shock by his sexual haste on the wedding night. Recollecting the first sexual experience from her married life

she says, " Then without any warning he fell on me, surprising me by the extreme brutality of the attack. I tried unsuccessfully to climb out of his embrace."

Kamala describes his first attempt at penetrating her as an unsuccessful rape. In fact, her body continued to resist him for nearly a fortnight. She describes the wedding night as brutal, insensitive and unfulfilling. His conversation, she says, was almost wholly sex-oriented; his enjoyment of sex was mechanical and pleasure seeking. Kamala felt that he had no love for her, that his marrying her was only part of an attempt to improve his social and financial status. He wrote his first letter not to her but to a cousin whom he had occasionally embraced. This inconsiderate and raw sexual approach of her husband to her who was then a girl of fourteen reflected on her attitude to love and sex. "*He was obsessed with sex*", she writes of her husband. "If it was not sex, it was the Co-operative Movement in India, and both these bored me. But I endured both, knowing that there was no escape from either. I even learnt to pretend an interest that I never once really felt "I knew then", she says," that if love was what I had looked for in marriage I would have to look for it outside its legal orbit. I wanted to be given an identity that was lovable." What she sought outside the "legal orbit" of marriage was redefinition of her feminine self. But she failed there once again. In this section, I deal with her husband's homosexuality with his friend and with her extra marital love affairs In *My Story*, describing this corrosive aspect of sex she says, " I felt then a revulsion from my womanliness. The weight of my breasts seemed to be crushing me. My private part was only a wound, the soul's wound showing through "Her husband's homosexuality is shown here, "At this time my husband turned

to his old friend for comfort. They behaved like lovers in my presence. To celebrate my birthday, they showed me out of the bedroom and locked themselves in. I stood for a while, wondering what two men could possibly do together to get some physical rapture but after some time, my pride made me move away."

The sexual haste of her fiancé gave her a rude shock, she writes : " At the hedge, beside the Damson tree, he embraced me, and puzzled by his conduct I ran back to my house". She was a burden and a responsibility. Neither her parents nor her grandmother could put up with for long. Therefore with the blessing of all, their marriage was fixed. And further she says," Before I left for Calcutta, my relative pushed me into a dark corner behind a door and kissed me sloppily near my mouth. He crushed my breasts with his thick fingers. Don't you love me, he asked me, and don't you like my touching you.... I felt hurt and humiliated." My Story She says : " His hands bruised my body and left blue and red marks on the skin' , she mentions, " Whenever he found me alone in a room, he began to plead with me to bare my breast and if I did not, he turned brutal and crude. His hands bruised my body and left blue and red marks on the skin. He told me of the sexual exploits he had shared with some of the maidservants in his house in Malabar".

Further, she describes

"My cousin asked me why I was cold and frigid, I did not know what sexual desire meant; not having experienced it even once. Don't you feel any passion for me he asked me ? I don't know, I said simply and honestly," She herself was aware of her frigidity, says : "Sex was far from my thoughts." Her husband's Pride of his having had contacts with "sluts and nymphomaniacs" creates a revolt in her heart against the very institution of arranged wedding.

Her husband gave her freedom to enjoy sex. Her fraternity also sounds bewildering within herself. As keki N Daruwalla rightly says that," The intensity of feeling, ably controlled in her better poems and the uninhibited manner in which she treated sex, immediately won for her big audience." Kamala Das is prominently a poet of love and pain, one stalking the other through a near neurotic world. There is an all pervasive sense of hurt throughout. Love, the lazy animal hungers of the flesh, hurt and humiliation are the wrap and woof of her poetic fabric."

Aggression manifests in : " I remained a virgin for nearly a fortnight after my marriage. He grew tired of the physical resistance which has nothing to do with my inclinations. "She writes also in" An Introduction" : A He did not beat me. But my sad woman-body felt so beaten. The Weight of my breasts and womb crushed me. I Shrank pitifully. Hence it was impossible for her to submit to his clumsy fondling. It was difficult for her to understand as to why she should be treated as just an object and not a partner in the game. The one who wanted to be given an identity; that was lovable soon realized that she was not needed by her husband except as an object of his sexual gratification. "During his stay in Malabar, he spent most of his time with his cousins and his sister-in-law, paying me little attention and never bothering to converse with me. At night he was like a chieftain who collected the taxes due to him from his vassal, simply and without exhilaration. " One can notice that the male psyche tends to treat woman as a desirable commodity, a vassal. A woman is obliged to satisfy the sexual hungers of her husband. The humiliation of a woman's situation of this kinds discussed in detail by Kamala Das. "For him such a body was an embarrassment, veteran that he was in the rowdy ways of sex which he had practiced with the maidservants who worked for his family". Her husband interested only in her body and used it for his bouts of lust, which seemed insatiable. Returning to this feminist's

relationship with her husband we are told that, "*The* only topic conversation that delighted him was sex and I was ignorant in the study of it. I did not have any sex appeal either." As a result, she could not satisfy -, he sexual hungers of her husband while he could not satisfy her emotional hunkers. So she decided to avenge the indifference of her husband. She thought that the best way to tortui him was to be unfaithful to him at least physically. In fact, she felt very happy when she could hurt him, She writes in : The Proud One: Is it any wonder that He felt hurt when the old wife turned whorish and withdrew from under him. Kamala Das's views on her parents, her adolescent infatuation with an adult and a bricklayer and her hatred for sex became the thematic nexus of this sect ion, Kamala Das says : " Like the majority of city-dwelling women, too tried adultery for a short while, " she says, " but I found it distasteful... When we embraced, we fell in the cerulean pools of his many mirrors as a deathless motif ... Yet I hated the exploitation of my body."

She tried to entrap a young bricklayer busy in building a modern house for her father, but that didn't come off. She says, "Among the workers, there was a young bricklayer who had come from another village on contract. He was extremely handsome. I sent my maid servant with a gold-coin as my gift and an invitation to meet me near the shrine of the Bhagavatis in the evening after moonrise." She then allowed one of her cousins to hold her in his warm arms for a few minutes and to kiss on her mouth. She describes the incident thus : " A cousin of ours one day grabbed me when I was climbing the stair whispering, " You are so beautiful" and although I did not believe him, in sheer gratitude I let him hold me in his arms for a couple of minutes. He panted with his emotion. When he kissed me on my mouth I disliked the smell of his stale

mouth” It was because of her husband's failure to understand her psychic and emotional needs that she could not get peace in his arms. She accuses him in "Man in a Season" and says that it was he who Let me toss my youth like coins Into various hands, you let me mate with Shadows, You let me sing in empty shrines, you let your Wife seek ecstasy in other's arms But no man could provide her all that she needed. Each one of them viewed her as an object. She says, " I expect by men to behave like Gods but none of them could ever rise to her expectations." Realizing that her needs, her inner experiences regarding her husband, she says, " I made up my mind to be unfaithful to him at least physically. " She rather wishes to bring about a sexual revolution and as Millett puts it, " a sexual revolution in terms of a change in attitudes and even her psychic structure is undoubted. Essential to any radical social change."

She describes the masculine attraction she felt, for a dark old man at the airport: "I had heard of his fabulous lusts. He drew me to him as a serpent draws its dazed victim, I was his slave. Tonight I tossed about in my bed thinking of his dark limbs and of his eyes glazed with desire. Very soon we met and I fell into his arms." Again Kamala Das describes the male attraction, she says, "I felt that I ought to meet him when I grew up, and perhaps become his mistress. " She was looking for an ideal lover. She describes, " I was looking for the one who went to Mathura and forgot to return to his Radha I was looking for an executioner whose axe would cleave my head into two." Kamala Das explores the concept of sexuality in the autobiography, " My story": " I let him take my body every night, hoping that the act would relax his nerves and make him tranquil. "She describes an incident when a visitor from Bombay called them for breakfast to his hostel room. She describes, " I was relaxed and happy when suddenly his hand

moved closer to my thigh and rested touching it lightly. I thought that it was accidental. But his hand crept under my thigh and became immobile. What was happening? Although I had men falling in love with me, none of them had shown sexual desire. This man's movements surprised me. He cultivated the habit of stroking my legs during conversation and caressing my long hair. I nearly fell in love with him."

Kamala Das also describes the incident to be a rape scene. One night when she was all-alone, the old Ayah allowed a drunken stranger to enter her room and commit an incomplete rape in the dark. The stranger visited her at night and "drew closer to me. Under his weight my limbs became rigid and I wished to raise myself to vomit. Soon enough, after an incomplete rape, he rolled off my body and lay inert at the foot of the bed." And then handsome young man from the Khar gymkhana came into her life. She fell in love with him. She describes a tender experience with her lover:

Conclusion

Kamala Surayya is essentially known for her bold and frank expression. The prominent features of her poetry are an acute obsession with love and the use of confession. The main theme of her poetry is based upon freedom, love and protection. She wrote on a diverse range of topics, often disparate- from the story of a poor old servant, about the sexual disposition of upper-middle-class women living near a metropolitan city or in the middle of the ghetto. Some of her better-known stories include Pakshiyude Manam, Neypayasam, Thanuppu, and Chandana Marangal. She wrote a few novels, out of which Neermathalam Pootha Kalam, which was received favourably by the reading public as well as the critics, stands out. Her popularity in Kerala is based chiefly on her short stories and autobiography, while her oeuvre in English, written under the name Kamala Das, is noted for the poems and explicit autobiography. She was also a widely read columnist and wrote on diverse topics including women's issues, child care, politics among others. Kamala Das was one of the most prominent feminist voices in the postcolonial era. She wrote in her mother tongue Malayalam as well as in English. To her Malayalam readers she was Madhavi Kutty and to her English patrons she was Kamala Das. On account of her extensive contribution to the poetry in our country, she earned the label 'The Mother of Modern Indian English Poetry'. She has also been likened to literary greats like Sylvia Plath because of the confessional style of her writing. On the occasion of her birth anniversary, we look into the remarkable life of this literary icon. *My Story* is an autobiographical book written by Indian author and poet Kamala Das, She is also known as Kamala Surayya or Madhavikutty. The book was originally published in Malayalam, titled *Ente Katha*. The book evoked violent reactions of admiration and criticism among the readers and critics. *My Story* is a

chronologically ordered, linear narrative written in a realist style. In the book, Das recounts the trials of her marriage and her painful self-awakening as a woman and writer. The entire account written in the format of a novel. Though *My Story* was supposed to be an autobiography, Das later admitted that there was plenty of fiction in it. And it remains to date the best-selling woman's autobiography in India.

In conclusion one can say on the feminine perspective of Kamala Das's poetry that it is about her alienation and her failure to get real love in life. She expresses in her poetry awareness of her surroundings, its sordidness, ugliness and dirtiness, poverty and selfishness. Her search for ideal love branches off into a person who is unloved, who is in revolt against one and all. She feels agony for her imperfect self; it wants to seek union with divine self. Her frankness in *My Story* about her extra martial love affairs has sent shock waves to her family members and also to her close relatives. In her autobiography she mixes fact with fiction. She finds city life civil and corrupt. There is similarity in her *My Story* and poetry.

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