

**MULTIFACETED DESIRES OF FLIGHTLESS FEMALES– AN INSIGHT INTO THE  
SELECT WORKS OF KAMALA DAS**

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**Abstract**

The confessional poets were jotting down their emotions on paper and crafting and constructing them, which were essential to their sensitive works. It is a branch of modern poetry having no place either for religious beliefs or moral values. The poet does not expect guilt, redemption, or retribution since there is no remorse. It is just that they bear all nuisances with their soul to get psychic relief finding it therapeutically useful. Sometimes we find ourselves slower than slow when searching for our identity. Kamala Das is a renowned personality when it comes to Indian women poets who begin to create her identity through her writings. She writes openly, confesses, and boldly claims her identity as an independent women writer in society. Das has stripped her inner angst and bitterness in her writings. She has discussed her life openly in her autobiography in her essays. Kamala retorts to the inquisitive meddlers who try their best to intervene in her way and language of paper and asks them, "why not leave me alone?". Despite facing hard criticism for her open and confessional writings, she falters not to halt. Instead, she transcends herself to get identified as the other ordinary woman. She corroborates to write for them as a "Loud Poster" for those who are laying her two-dimensional obscenity over weeklies, etc. Her poetry reflects the real identity she left behind in this materialistic world. Her bold and confessional style has won millions of people's hearts.

**Keywords:** confessional, love, sex, guilt, desires

Das's autobiography, 'My Story,' is a broad description of her lonely childhood. She wrote tragic poems about her broken dolls that lost their heads and limbs. She confessed that "each poem of mine made me cry," as her experiences inspire most verses. She is best known for her bold, frank, and forthright expression. An acute and chronic obsession with love and sexual desires leads her to use the confessional mode in her writing, forming the prominent feature of her works. Kamala Das published six volumes of her poetry between 1965 and 1985. She intensely describes her personal experiences, including her transformation into womanhood and her unquenched thirst for love in and outside of matrimony. She has struggled all her life due to the oppression of matriarchal values after she inherited her ancestral home in rural South India. We can witness that Das praised its fierce originality, bold images, exploration of female sexuality, and intensely personal voice in her early poetry. Later, they lamented that it had several flaws, like it lacked attention to its structure, delivery, and craftsmanship.

In 'An Introduction,' Kamala Das wrote in free verse in a conversational style that seems to follow the writer's thoughts. The poem presents glimpses of the poet's life, her feelings, and her ideas in a frank and bold manner. *An Introduction* also triggers a process of introspection and self-discovery in the writer's mind. At the poem's end, Das realizes her essential identity with womankind. Finally, the poem expresses the poet's craving for love, frustration, and deprivation from being denied. These themes relate in Das's works:

"It is I who drink lonely Drinks at twelve midnight, in hotels of strange towns. It is I who Laugh, it is I who lie dying with a rattle in my throat. I am a sinner, I am a saint. I am the

beloved and the Betrayed. I have no joys which are not yours, no Aches which are not yours. I, too call myself I."

The characteristic feature in all of Kamala Das's writing seems to be her desperate obsession with love. Ominous premonitions are usually correct when it comes to women's identity. Das establishes herself as a desiring female subject searching for love in a world that rarely understands her. To her, womanhood involves specific collective experiences. A marriage of convenience still thrives in our society, which was a bitter experience for Kamala Das. Her autobiography *My Story* reveals that her poems are an intense study of the personal traumas and tribulations she tolerated in her married life, deprived of her emotional bonding. Her poems are not only confessions but vigorous attempts to voice her identity.

*My Story* focuses exclusively on the core of skepticism in a woman's niche and individuality. From the beginning, Das has demonstrated an uninterrupted and continuous theme and expression, concentrating on the significant quest for a search for an identity. She speaks out her heart on her premises. Kamala Das has redefined the meaning of identity and liberated herself as a woman and a poet. She renounces the masks and roles defined by society. She refuses to accept the shackles putting limitations due to her anatomy. When Das speaks about love outside marriage, she is not recommending adultery but merely searching for a relationship that gives both love, identity, and acceptance as a woman and is her right. A study of her distorted psychic geography traces her excruciating journey from the physical to the spiritual realm. She struggles to free herself from the lure of the body and seeks redemption in Lord Krishna, an ethereal form.

Kamala Das was one of the most controversial yet daring woman poets. She has made an immense and spirited contribution to broadening the writing culture for women. This paper explores Das's struggle for identity through her writing, facing a pinch of appreciation and a bulk of criticism for the nature of her works. Das unwraps her self-experienced feelings under the patriarchal society by composing them in poetry. She made several attempts to make the world feel her womanly presence by letting out the real ongoing of the woman's autobiography through her pen and not through a man. It creates a unique edge for herself and sets an example for Indian women in a patriarchal society when she writes about the distorted inner psychology:

"I must most deliberately  
Whip up a froth of desire,  
a passion for suiting the desire  
I must let my mind striptease  
I must extrude  
Autobiography." ("Composition")

She defends herself, arguing that her writing in English expresses a mind that "sees and hears and is aware." Kamala's attempt to justify the importance of her discreet individual capabilities, her likes and dislikes rightly prove Bruce King's remarkable observation:

"Writing is a means of creating a place in the world; the use of the personal voice and self-revelations are means of self-assertion."

Kamala, in her poem "*Loud Posters*," declares her preparedness to be the loudspeakers that can voice out on behalf of the whole suffering community:

"I am today a creature turned inside  
Out. To spread myself across wide highways  
Of your thoughts, a stranger like a loud poster  
Was always my desire."

She portrays herself as representing a hopeful future of significantly underestimated women. Due to her transcendence into a strong female figure, which she feels is gifted to her through her writing. She highlights in "*Someone Else's Song*":

"I am a million, million people  
Talking all at once, with voices  
Raised in the clamor, like maids  
At villagewells."

Kamala condemns society's attitude of imposing on a girl child, threatening to call her a schizophrenic or "nympho" identity if she tries to lead a simple life of freedom according to her own will. She observes in her poem "*An Introduction*":

"Don't play pretend games.  
Don't play at schizophrenia or be a  
Nympho."

Kamala's claim for women's identity appears in a multifaceted way. After exposing society's hypocrisy and imposing role of the female child in the poem "*An Introduction*," she brings the modern women's assertive identity formation as human beings at the end of the poem "*An Introduction*." When the stereotypical dominating society does not allow Kamala to lead a free life of her own terms and tries to interrupt it with their "fit in" and "belong" sorts of commands, she retorts to them boldly, acknowledging them to accept her original individuality and identity as she is in "*An Introduction*":

"It is I who laugh; it is I who make love  
And then, feel shame, it is I who lie dying  
With a rattle in my throat. I am a sinner,  
I am a saint. I am the beloved and the  
Betrayed. I have no joys which are not yours,  
No Aches which are not yours,  
I, too, call myself I."

Thus, Kamala Das created havoc in the world of women by writing daringly, identifying herself openly, and expressing her womanly feelings and experiences without inhibiting anything. She has sculpted her own identity through her works and inspired many women to write in their regional languages and English. She proved the men's world in India wrong in having the concept that the writing kingdom is reined by them alone. It is observed that after Kamala Das, many more Indian women poets came forward with their writing oeuvre expressed publicly in front of others, bringing many changes to women's writings. Indian women poets' writings cannot be discussed without laminating Kamala Das's poetry. Her writings become a treasure house for ages of Indian women writers to look back.

We all know that gender-based discrimination ultimately brings disaster to society. Das has tried to show that patriarchy is pervasive, staunchly followed, multi-layered, and deeply rooted in our societal infrastructure. It has become an intricate subconscious part of our collective consciousness. Society gives preference to boy child not only due to economic factors but other factors, such as religious, social, etc., also contribute to this preference. During social construction, gender is stereotyped based on whether or not the roles played are essential. Males and females are assigned different roles and are supposed to perform them daily. The roles believed to be completed by the male are considered necessary. Based on their superior roles, males are accorded higher status than females. Kamala has portrayed the mind of people who find males fit for business chores, and females are needed to remain inside the domestic sphere. This sex-based division of labor is one of the fundamental causes of gender discrimination. In patriarchal values, males and females are expected to only stick to their assigned roles. Performing other gender's roles may become a cause of embarrassment. This division of labor affects not only females but male also. It also puts a burden on males and limits their interest and talent.

In a patriarchal society, paradoxically, women play an essential role in perpetuating discrimination against women.

Das's writings are an intriguing part of her own life story. She could never go beyond herself in a broad spectrum and judge situations objectively. Das could not differentiate between her usual and poetic or creative selves. As a result, most of her short stories are nothing more than a paraphrasing of her autobiography. Thus, we can understand that one's sufferings differ from one's life experiences. A lesson can only be an experience when there is detachment. Kamala Das's failed attempts to distinguish between her experiences and desires have proved to be disastrous to her poetic credo. The confessional poetry of Kamala Das avoids not only clichés of emotional expression but also every single trace of sentimentality, empathy, and pathos, even while dealing with the most intimate and personal experiences. Her poetry results from a lifelong struggle to relate her experiences to the whole wide world outside— it is a hard struggle to find contentment in her personal life. In her poems, Kamala Das bare her all sorts of hesitations, failures, ignorance, dissatisfaction, shame, and guilt since they all represent the stamp of her personality. There is no attempt to idealize or glorify any part of herself. This paper seeks to discuss and analyze the theme of gender discrimination and the issue of the marginalization of women in society. Kamala Das has highlighted that gender discrimination is quite unnatural and unethical. She brings out the complex and multidimensional nature of the issue that depicts the pervasiveness and deep-rootedness of patriarchal values in the collective consciousness of society.

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