Chapter - II

AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE OF FEMINISM
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By writing the self, the woman writer could challenge accepted notions of the female. Autobiography as expression became an accepted means for the woman writer to explore her personal identity as well as create a newer and better perception on gender issues.

Life events and their compulsions create an urge for self expression in human beings. Autobiography as a literary genre has its origin in such compelling moments that necessitate the assertion of self through such utterance. According to Liz Stanley, “The autobiographical archetype is the Bidungsroman, the tale of the progressive travelling of a life from troubled or stifled beginnings in which obstacles are overcome and the true actualized or revealed, and then the tale may, prototypically, end, or it may go on to document yet further troubles turned to triumphs.”
Smothered by the various pressure around, the autobiographer seeks to quench his thirst for free self-expression in the writing of her life-story as she feels she lived it.

The writer's mind is not only creative but analytical and more than that it is receptive. The people who write autobiographies have the motif either to analyse their failures or to legitimize their victories.

Being women, they involve themselves with 'I' and 'My' word of experience more on an emotional plane. Their autobiography is rather a subjective reflection of 'self' with an objective realistic viewpoint. This is essentially a woman's self exploring its psychic potential so far neglected or crushed or bruised in the male world.

The focus of women autobiographers, naturally, is more on the factual than on the conceptual. Among women who write autobiographies, their public contact in society has a vital role to perform.
Patricia Spacks agrees, "Most female autobiographers, until recently, have been artistic performers by profession—dancers, actresses, writers—their demand for public attention in modes relatively acceptable for women predating their written self-description. The housewife seldom offers her life to public view.

Kamala Das's life-story appears to be her journey from innocence to experience, ignorance to knowledge, youth to maturity. After a seemingly unending conflict between the inner and the outer world, she at last felt to be at home with herself. At the end, she creates an impression of being at peace with the present through introspection into the past.

In fact, the colour of the skin seemed to have tremendous significance for Kamala Das because she associated suffering and inferiority with dark-complexion. She was hunted by the idea that she was dark and ugly and hence inferior to the white. She was so obsessed with the awareness of her dark
complexion and inferior physical appearance that she remembers going to cook in the afternoon asking him secretely " if I were really ugly." (My Story p.38). Later, she posed the same question to Carlo, "Am I ugly, I asked Carlo". (My Story, p.123) Kamala Das undoubtedly suffered from a kind of colonial neurosis. She felt inferiority and loss of self-confidence which she reveals: "In those days the fair-complexioned folks had some kind of a superiority complex. The British had instilled in us certain mistaken notions of beauty and refinement." (My Story p.122).

Kamala Das wrote "sad poems about dolls who lost their heads and had to remain headless for eternity." She herself was as helpless as these dolls. Her autobiography too was to have cathartic effects. She writes:

I must let my mind striptease
I must extrude
Autobiography.

("Composition", The old playhouse and Other
Poems, P.5)

It was only in her writing that she could feel free to express her sorrows. She writes: "My grief fell like drops of honey on the white sheets on my desk. My sorrows floated over the pages of magazines darkly as heavy monsoon clouds do in the sky." (My Story P.111)

In her works of art, Kamala Das tells us how at the age of nineteen she, as a neglected wife, suffered a nervous breakdown. A stay in Malabar with her grandmother who 'bathed my head' every morning with chilled Amlaguel and got the Kattumadam Nambudiripad to tie round my neck a black thread and an amulet shaped like a peepul leaf cured her completely. So it is not surprising that her moments of rebellion against social conventions and bourgeois morality are chained with a nostalgia for her apparently lost heritage:

"By the time I was born, all the gem-encrusted jewellery was sold and the red palanquins were rolled up and stored with the brown funerary jars
in the attic. The Neermatala brought forth her yearly harvest of perfume and the moon came again and again, but I didn't once hear the palanquin bearers cry "hey Ho......Hey Ho......"; Like the rolled gold bangles our maid-servant's arms, the color of our skins grew tarnished. We forgot that we were descendants of those beautiful women, loved more than life itself by their husbands" (28).

"Kamala Das did display tremendous courage in revolting against the sexual colonialism and providing hope and confidence to young women that they can refuse and reject victim position, that they can frustrate the sexist culture's efforts to exploit, passivise and marginalize women."

A desperate obsession with love in terms of sex is one of the prominent features of her works of art. She frankly speaks about her sex life. Her poetry as well as her prose writing is a strong feminist revolt against the myth of male sovereignty. She is desperately keen on dethroning the myth of femininity and protest against the fact that "sex roles" as perpetuated in society are
repressive for women and that the 'monstrous ego' of man dwarfs the woman. She laments that women have always been seen through men's eyes and for men a woman is just a womb, an ovary, a female. "Being born a woman is my awful tragedy" (37) writes Sylvia Plath. For Kamala Das too, "being female and being fully human were mutually exclusive." She tells us "I felt then a revulsion for 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." (My Story, P.104)

Woman as Simone de Beauvoir argues is called "the sex". This shows that the male perceives woman as a sexual being. "For him she is sex, absolute sex; no less," But Kamala Das hates the exploitation of her body. Man–woman relationship are governed primarily by lust. It is also clear that she does not experience desire as a natural experience. She rather has to whip it up and this requires deliberate effort. Her contempt for lust is also clear in "The Conflagration":
Women, is this happiness this lying buried
Beneath a man? (26)

This is very conventionally important especially for women who, since their early childhood, are taught to hide their carnal desires; to cover their bodies, to negate; in a word, the existence of their flesh. Kamala Das explores her discovery of sex and flesh. All the critics agree that the main feature of her poetry is a constant attention to the urges of female sexual life, expressed in a language, which is quite unusual, especially for Indian authors. She seems to be the first woman who has ever made sex in the world. Actually, Das is, if not the first Indian woman who makes sex, certainly one of the first to talk freely about it. In her works of art, we can hear the echo of her struggle to free herself from the chains of patriarchy, arranged marriage and tradition, to discover an uninhibited sexuality, out of the bondage of family and convention.

This type of approach to sex, however, is not joyful. Very often Das experiments pain and
disillusion in her transgressions and digressions. She is treading on completely new ground. She has to invent her own language, to find the words to talk about her body and its needs. See, for instance, how she manages to describe the physical aspects of a marital relationship:

"You were pleased
With my body's response, its weather, its usual shallow convulsion. You dribbled spittle into my mouth...."

In Das's world, bodies speak with convulsions and juices. There is no redemption in the body. She is well aware that a free sexuality is not the answer to the evils of the female condition.

To justify her behaviour, she doesn't hesitate to utter the needs of her body and describe the urges of her flesh, in a language which is surely meant to shock the people.

Ask me, everybody, ask me
What he sees in me, ask why he is called a
lion,
a libertine, ask me the flavour of his
mouth, ask me why his hand sways like a hooded
snake
Before it clasps my pubic. Ask me why like
A great tree, felled, he slumps against my
Breasts,
And sleeps.

Sujata Bhatt uses natural metaphors by
inserting the rhythms of body and flesh into the
course of natural life. In the poem, "The kama
Sutra Retold" Bhatt, telling of the first sexual
intercourse between two teenagers, rejects the
crude language of sexuality and uttering it
shamelessly.

("It's not enough to say/she kissed his
balls/licked his cock long/how her tongue could not
stop") she tries to create a perfect union between
the lovers and nature.
Kamala Das and Eunice de Souza write about their uneasy relationship with their bodies in the state of adolescence:

"I heard it said
My parents wanted to a boy
I’ve done my best to qualify,
I hid the bloodstains
On my clothes
And let my breasts sag." (38)

And Kamala Das:

"The weight of my breasts and womb crushed me.
I shrank Pitifully; Then....... I wore a shirt and my Brother’s trousers, cut my hair short and Ignored
My womanliness." (39)

The Total impression of her works of art has created one of a bold, ruthless honesty tearing passionately at conventional attitudes to reveal the quintessential woman within.
In the simplest kind of psychoanalytic theory, the conscious use of language is designated male and unconscious female. This results from a feminist appropriation of Freud's distinction between the language of the unconscious, which uses images and puns as freely as poetry in creating those irrational and ambiguous scenarios we call dreams, and that conscious, 'rational' and disambiguated language in which our daily affairs are conducted. In non-feminist discourse, Freud's account of the dream-work is read as one of the great defences of poetry, because it establishes the 'poetic' uses of language.

Kamala Das turns to the mythical world of Krishna and Vridavan to seek lasting love and fulfillment. She imagines herself as Radha and finds comfort in the arms of imaginary Krishna. Further she experiences absolute liberty from the rigid social code and the constraints of super ego in the presence of Krishna. In psychological terms, Krishna, as Sudhir Kakar
remarks," encourages the individual to identify with an ideal primal self, released from all social and super ego constraints. Krishna's promise, like that of Dionysus in ancient Greece, is one of utter freedom and instinctual exhilaration."(8)

For the poet, her ideal lover is nowhere to be found. On Kamala Das's search for such a lover, Sunanda P. Chavan rightly observes: "Kamala Das's search for ideal love and the resultant disappointment seem to involve the psychological phenomenon of 'the animus' struggling to project the masculine imprint as interpreted by Jung. The attempt to seek in every lover the perfection of masculine being is destined to end in failure because of the impossibility of realizing the ideal in human form" (9)

By identifying herself with Radha and Mira she is subconsciously finding a justification for her quest for love outside marriage. "It was entirely without lust,"
says she elsewhere, "I hoped that some day as I lay with a man, somewhere beneath the bone, at a deadened spot, a contact would be made and that afterwards, each movement of my life became meaningful, I look for the beauteous Krishna in every man. Every Hindu girl is in reality wedded to Lord Krishna" (11).

One would equate a repressed unconscious with a repressed femininity, and identify man the oppressor as the agent of repression. If so, then the dark continent of the unconscious is the place in which to search for an authentically feminine specificity. "The writing of women’, according to Marguerite Duras, "Is really translated from the unknown." (13)

‘Ghanashyam’ is one of the poems in which Kamala Das invokes the Radha Krishna myth. She identifies herself with Radha and seeks to realize union with the Lord. The Radha-Krishna myth provides an objective correlative for her passionate earnings and repressed desires.
One day her pen-friend Carlo came personally to her in the autumn of her life. He pleaded with her to have free love, forgetting all about her grey-eyed gymkhana friend and about her indifferent husband. She wanted to run away with him but being a mother of two children that was simply not possible for her.

The Inspector in "A Doll for the child Prostitute" who overcomes his debauching instincts to become a godfather to his hapless mistress.

One of Freud's major findings was the extraordinary place that sexuality has in the history of the person; that it sets the paradigm for the person's relationship to all objects of perception. Sexuality forms the material base of the psyche as conceived by psychoanalysis. The theory of infantile sexual development and the role of sexuality are the material basis of psychoanalysis.

Freud regarded the process of sexual development as a fundamental component in the origin of civilization.
The first manifestation of infantile sexuality to which Freud turns is "thumb sucking'. The activity is auto-erotic. The auto-erotism is, Freud says, the "most striking feature of the sexual activity." Thumb-sucking is derived, of course, from the sucking involved in the ingestion of food, and it is an attempt to repeat the experience of satisfaction found in feeding time. Here one sees the first example of Frued's famous dictum; "The finding of an object is in fact a refinding of it." Thumb-sucking is an attempt to repeat a pleasurable activity; when the sucking brings satisfaction through the stimulation of the lips and the memory of earlier experience. It is seen by freud as a fully sexual event.

The sexual desire is based upon the physiological need, upon the material but is itself a mental phenomenon. Desire becomes a basis for consciousness for humanness. Psychoanalysis contributes to our understanding only in its efforts to grasp the development of the dynamic of consciousness and desire. It interprets the manifestation of this dynamic in signs to rediscover the lost meaning of desire, the lost humanness of the subject.
In the theory of infantile sexuality the role of psychoanalysis as a tool for understanding the past was clearly evident. The importance of the sexual as both material and mental and Freud’s dialectical view of development are crucial here because they show why psychoanalysis is concerned with the past. Since nothing really dies in the unconscious, the past continues to be preserved within the depths of the mental. The unconscious foundations, which are similar in everyone. Sexual urges are, of course, part of these unconscious foundations that are common to everyone. These urges, however, must be inhibited in the group. Genital sexuality must be repressed. The genital aim, Freud says, physiologically requires two persons, a third is superfluous. He notes. “Two people coming together for the purpose of sexual satisfaction.”

Sex is not only an intensely and intrinsically pleasurable experience but it can not act as a revitalizing force in an otherwise sterile act. Freud, in fact, views sex as a prototype of all pleasurable
experience of life. A continuous frustration of the body's sexual needs can be disastrous to somebody like Kamala Das, given her fierce instinctuality. A healthy emotional and sexual life would have given her a sense of security and stopped her psyche from decaying. This view acquires validation from Freud's observation: "experience shows - that women, who, as being the actual vehicle of the sexual interests of mankind, are only endowed in a small measure, with the gift of sublimating their instincts, and who when they are subjected to the disillusionments of marriage, fall ill of severe neuroses which permanently darken their lives."

Freud attributes neuroses of woman to sexual dissatisfaction resulting from the rigours of civilized sexual morality. Biologically speaking, marital unfaithfulness could be a viable cure for the ailment. However, such a thing entails perhaps the most severe indictment in the rigidly organized Indian society. Freud continues: 'the more strictly a woman has been brought up and the more sternly she has submitted to the demands of civilization, the more she is afraid of taking this way out; and in the conflict between her
desires and her sense of duty, she once more seeks refuge in a neurosis. Nothing protects her virtue as securely as illness."

Kamala Das says, elsewhere, in "My Story" "when he returned to Bombay the first letter that he wrote was not to me but to girl - cousin who had allowed him to hug her while he walked towards my home in the evenings. I made up my mind to be unfaithful to him, at least physically". (My story 95)

There are psychofeminists who forage in Freud and Lacon for a theory of feminine sexuality unconstrained by male norms and categories, and who examine literary text for unconscious articulations of feminine desire or traces of where it has been repressed.

What is called 'sex' in our society ought to be called therefore by its proper name, which is 'sexism'; and the only thing to be said in favour of pornography (Porne 'prostitute', grapho-'write') is that it indeed spells out the connection between sex and violence which is at the heart of that peculiarly masculine view of sexuality which fails to recognize itself as male-
specific. Rosalind Innes confirms that, "By reinforcing the macho myth that every woman secretly wants to be raped. : (16)

The giving and receiving of oral stimulation can be quite pleasurable; and for many women it is the easiest way to reach orgasm. Oral sex is a very intimate act. It is more intimate than intercourse because it involves the taste and aroma of what are often thought of a "dirty parts". They are not, of course, dirty but they are private. Oral sex obsession is fun, pleasurable, loving and intimate. Kamala Das says,

"........... You are pleased
With my body’s response, it’s weather its usual shallow Convulsions. You dribbled spittle into my mouth, you poured Yourself into every nook and cranny you embalmed
My poor lust with your bitter -sweet juices."

(The old playhouse and Other Poems P-1)

Sex-obsession is behaviour that is learned. It is not inborn. It is easy to confuse normal sexual
desire and conduct with addictive compulsion and gratification. A person can have a stronger than normal sexual appetite and not be an addict.

Addictive sex ends in despair. When married couples make love they are most fulfilled for having had the experience. Addictive sex leaves the participants feeling guilty regretting the experience. Rather than fulfilling, it is empty and they despair over who they had sex with.

Kamala Das, elsewhere, 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, don’t like my touching you....? I felt hurt and humiliated," (My Story, P-82)

Health experts use a number of labels for this potentially serious condition. It is sometimes called hypersexuality, nymphomania, erotomania or perversion. Some doctors call it sex-obsession. Others use the term sexual-addiction, comparing it with the
uncontrolled use of a drug. Others argue that it is impulse control or obsessive compulsive behaviour.

No matter what name is attached to the behaviour, compulsive sexual behaviour is a very real affliction that interferes with everyday living. Sexual behaviour becomes a problem and is considered compulsive when it's often enough to interfere with our daily living and with our relationships. If someone's sexual behaviour is compulsive, someone may display it in a number of ways including: Having multiple sexual partners or extramarital affairs, Kamala Das, says, elsewhere, in My Story- "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." (My Story, P-84)

He has had sex with a succession of anonymous partners, and treated them as objects to be used for sex. Engaging in masochistic, or sadistic sex, such as experiencing sexual excitement by inflicting or receiving pain during sex: 'Then without warning he
fell on me, surprising me by the extreme brutality of the attack. I tried unsuccessfully to climb out of his embrace. Then bathed in perspiration and with my heart palpitating wildly, I begged him to think of God. (My Story, P-89)

Feeling compelled to engage in sexual activity when someone is stressed, anxious or depressed. Kamala Das says, elsewhere, in My Story, "I let him take my body every night, hoping that the act would relax his nerves and make him tranquil." (My Story, P-102)

My people who are sexually obsessed are married and appear to live otherwise normal lives. They often lead double lives may have difficulty establishing and maintaining emotional intimacy. Sexuality obsessive behaviour tends to be chronic, intense and beyond control. People with compulsive sexual behaviour often use sex as an escape from other problems, such as loneliness, depression and anxiety or sex.

Many experts believe that other psychological disorders underlie sexual obsession and compulsions. Sexual obsession may be a maladaptive coping mechanism.
for other emotional problems, including mood and personality disorders.

Kamala Das, says, "At this time my husband turned to his old friend for comfort. They behaved like lovers in my presence. To celebrate my birth day, they shoved me out of bedroom and locked themselves in. I stood for a while, wondering what two men could possibly do together to get some physical rapture." (My Story, P-104).

If someone grew up in a dysfunctional family or were sexually, emotionally or physically abused as a child, someone may have developed an unhealthy attitude towards sex. These early traumatic experiences may lead someone to feel shameful and unworthy, emotions that can inhibit normal sexual expression and intimacy and can result in extremes in sexual activity:

"What on earth are you doing here, Kamala?" Shouted the teacher. "Why don't you join the others? What a peculiar child you are." Kamala Das further says, "It was customary for the Nair girl to marry when she was hardly out of her childhood and it was
also customary for the much older husband to give her a rude shock by his sexual haste on the wedding night" (My Story- P-26)

"I was a misfit everywhere (My story, P-103) if someone is feeling lonely and depressed, someone may perceive one's sexual compulsions as a way of feeling the voids in one's life.

Kamala Das elsewhere says in 'My Story' “ I knew then that if love was what I looked for in marriage, I would have to look for it outside it's legal orbit.” (My Story, P95). She intends to propose a young bricklayer through a maidservant to meet her near the shrine of the Bhagavati in the evening after moonrise but in vain.”

Women who are aroused easily, and have sex frequently were once called nymphomaniacs. They were regarded as insatiable, on the prowl constantly for a sex partner. There are well defined symptoms: frequently engaging is more sex and with more partners than intended. Kamala Das, says, elsewhere, “A cousin of our one day grabbed me when I was climbing the
stairs 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." (My Story, PP 95-96)

Continually engaging in the sexual behaviour despite negative consequences, such as broken relationship or potential health risks.

A woman with this disorder pursues sex despite harmful effects on her life, not to enhance or to add intimacy to her life. She craves sex not because of her high sex drive, not because she loves sex, but because of deep-rooted issues which drive her to harm herself physically and psychologically, much like any other addiction.

Compulsive sexual behaviour, or the inability to control one’s urges, is a specific facet of sexual addiction. According to the esteemed Mayo Clinic, sexual obsessions and compulsions are recurrent, distressing and interfere with daily functioning. Suffering from a sexual disorder, like addiction or compulsion has nothing to do with libido or a desire of sex. Simply stated sexual addiction is the lack of
control of some sexual behaviour on relationship. Perhaps the most helpful definition is a practical one: Sexual behaviour that has no a negative effect on one's life. Kamala Das says, elsewhere, "Bring her a glass of water, Das, he said to my husband, and when he was away, I was kissed gently on my cheeks. I rose from the chair immediately. Don't you love me at all, he asked lowering his voice." (My Story, P-144)

"Sex - addiction" is an umbrella term what’s actually a collection of often overlapping behaviours. First, there is the stereoptical sex-addict, which covers things like using pornography in any of its forms, visiting prostitutes, engaging in exhibitionism and voyeurism.

Kamala Das says:

"Then......I wore a shirt and my Brother's trousers, cut my hair short and ignored My womanliness."

(The Old Playhouse and Other Poem, P-27)
The dreams which form a part of feminine psyche’s obsession with love in terms of sex seem to add psychoanalytical dimension to the theme of love in the works of Kamala Das. The poet tends to turn with significant frequency to the subject of dreams either for their thematic or their imagistic potential. For instance, from thematic point of view the poet confesses:

".......... I dream of obscene hands
Striding up my limbs and of morgues where the night-lights Glow on faces, shuttered by the soul’s Exist."

('Gino'. The old Playhouse and Other Poems, P13)

In "The Corridors", she probes into the recurrent dream. "Of a house where each silent/corridors leads to warm/Yellow rooms" (Summer in Calcutta P-36)

Apart from the imagistic reference to dreams in a number of poems, the intense sexual awareness of her neurotic psyche is evidenced in the recurrent imagery
of limbs, rooms, mirrors and in her attempt to identify the search for true love with the search for a misplaced father.

"To tell: I’ve misplaced a father
Somewhere, and I look
For him now everywhere."

(‘Glass’, The old Playhouse and Other Poems, P-22)

After every encounter, the woman-body feels so beaten. There is a search for the ‘misplaced father’ at the end of the poem. The father figure merges within the lover in a Freudian manner and the picture that emerges is that of ‘every woman who seeks love’, fitting from one man to another as if in unmentioned revenge against the male order. Her search for a father also indicates that she wanted a life partner who would have sacrificed his life and pleasures for her love.

But it is difficult to agree with Eunice de Souza’s Psychoanalytical interpretation of Kamala Das as a nymphomaniac. For, in her poetry the feminine psyche’s
obsession with sex is prevented from being into nymphomania because of the inherent urge for spiritual fulfillment in love through the medium of sex.

In an introduction to a collection of feminist essays published in 1987 Gail Chester and Sigrid Nilsen declare: Writing plays a vital part in forming our perceptions of our lives as woman is working out 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 of masculine hierarchies. The feeling of social responsibility in reconstructing her social role gave the woman writer courage and confidence. Freudian psychoanalysis where the verbalization of individual experience was considered therapeutic, made the autobiographical mode itself popular, the idea of autobiography as expression became an accepted means for the woman writer to explore her personal identity.
as well as create a newer and better perception on gender issues.

She projects herself as the passive female, incapable of action and replases into hysteria when the milieu becomes intolerable for her. When confronted with her husband’s adultery and illness of her son, for instance, she describes her state of mind thus: ‘The growing misery inside me, the darkness that lay congealed, removed from my face all that was once pretty. I was like a house with all its lights put out.’ (My Story, P 103)

‘My story’ gives us an indication of the functional aspect of the work. This is well in keeping with psychoanalytic theories of autobiography. They emphasize the inconsistencies achieved by selective retention during memorizing.

Kamala Das has become the mouthpiece of all women, suffering passive pathos in a male dominated society. 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.

Kamala Das has succeeded in gaining into the subconscious needs, desires and aspirations of the female mind. Anisur Rahman comments in this connection, "As a poet, she explores her psychic geography with an exceptional female energy and achieves the capability to express her inimitable vision through the technique of sincerity."

Robert Lowell, Theodore Roethke, Anne Sexton, John Berryman and Sylvia Plath are world famous poets in the confessional mode. Sylvia Plath is often compared with Kamala Das. She was also emotionally and socially upset and committed suicide at the young age of thirty. She wrote poetry which had profound insights into the inner depths of human mind. Kamala Das also shared some of the qualities of Sylvia Plath, like her, suicidal tendencies. Kamala Das’s poem "The Suicide" is significant in this connection she writes:

"O sea, I am fed up
I want to be simple
I want to be loved
And
If love is not to be had
I want to be dead, just dead,

While Sylvia Plath writes,

"Dying
Is an art, like everything else,
I do it, exceptionally well." (18)

Confessional poetry is a hybrid mode of poetry that came into existence as a consequence of the popularization of the psychological studies, the spread of the Freudian and Jungian theories and the emergence of the feminist movement. "The female voice is first of all not objective or analytical", according to Anne Sexton, "The 'I' of the woman's poetic voice will be liable more often because the defenses which make the male more objective are not part of the female acculturation process." (19) Confessional poetry means objective, analytical or even clinical observation of incidents from one's own life. The chaos of the psychic situation becomes the ground of a reoriented
art in which the beset self is the testing ground and the embodiments of all human possibilities—the terrors, pains, early miseries, regrets, vexations, remain as the proofs of one’s existence, the degree of the intensity confirming one’s reality. The poetry never reaches a stage of sickness and break. In her morbid moods Kamala Das comes close to the more pathological states of confessional poetry when she steers clear of self pity on the one hand, and the exhibitionism on the other. She is profoundly moving, and the loneliness and despair come through.

Confessional poetry is concerned with the disrupted self of the poet. For the confessional poet the entire world is a manifestation of his own disturbed consciousness. Kamala Das speaks about the nature of her own work and provides a valuable guide to its understanding and appreciation.

The creative process has feminine quality, and the creative work arises from unconscious depths—we might say, from the realm of the mothers. Whenever the creative force predominates human life is ruled and moulded by the unconscious as against the active will,
and the conscious ego is swept along on a subterranean current, being nothing more than a helpless observer of events. "The work in progress becomes the poet's fate and determines his psychic development." A great work of art is like a dream; for all its apparent obviousness it doesn't explain itself.

In fact, 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. The poet is outrageously candid in her revelations but most of the queer and shocking experiences and incidents in the story are rather wish-fulfillment of a repressed soul than true indulgences.

The theme of the return of the repressed childhood neurosis, we come across in Kamala Das's autobiography 'My Story'. The repressed impulses and memories lie buried in the unconscious of the protagonist- but stage a return in the form of a full blow neurotic picture during her life. "Return of the repressed" happens to be one of the key discoveries of
Freud. Kamala Das is deeply disturbed by the return of her repressed childhood memories. She gets fixated at the Oedipal stage when, according to Freud, "little girls entertain fantasies of bearing the father's baby." This neurotic phase, common to all children, is traversed by the girl in the normal course of childhood by repressing her many instinctual demands particularly the one's concerning the father.

Woman writer's autobiography is rather a subjective reflection of 'self' with an objective realistic viewpoint. This is essential a woman's self exploring its psychic potential so far neglected or crushed in the male world. The image of repressed womanhood that bracket them together as the representative types of the universal female suffering. In the preface to My Story Kamala Das declares that it is written not merely to honour the commitments to the editor of a journal but even to empty herself of all pressure of her mind. The writing of autobiography for Kamala Das was thus rooted in psychic and economic compulsions. The therapeutic purpose of writing has been served and the book has helped her through mental relaxation, move towards the physical recovery. But it
is interesting to note that in an interview with Suma Josson (The Sunday Observer, November 8, 1987), Kamala goes to the extent of repudiating her autobiography, claiming that "it does not project her real self at all, that if she had been a 'rich woman' she would not have written' such a book'. She even claims that she entered social service to 'atone' for having written the book."

For her poetry is a sort of compulsion-neurosis, so intense is her need to find a release from her emotions. The point about Kamala Das's remarks about poets is not that she views poetry as a perpetual torment and obsession. Their special relevance lies in that she draws attention to what is common assumption that is, the poet's own personality is the raw material for her poetry. There is in her a sure but unconscious adherence to the compulsions of the inner form and a pattern which is dictated by the weight and direction of her subject matter. Her subject matter is her personality: beautiful, sensitive, bold and tormented. Kamala Das's poetry is termed as a "sort of compulsive neurosis". In it love experience is a kaleidoscope of numerous tensions. Das has explored
into the meaning of love lust and sexuality. For her ideal love is a fulfilled experience attained through sex. Kamala Das seeks redemption through her poetry. She produces poetry only when she comes up against moments of frustration for her personal self. Her turning to mythology in the poems “Radha”, “Radha-Krishna”, “The Maggot”, “Lines Addressed to Devdasi” and “Ghanashyam” has to be viewed in this light. These poems in the true sense of the word, are only her attempts to lighten the burden of her heart.

The speaking voice in the genre of the poetry of Kamala Das is unmistakably the poet herself. We find in her poetry several admission and a bold treatment of private life in an attempt to redefine her identity through ruthless self analysis. The confessional ‘I’ in poetry can be defined only with respect to psychological matrix of experience treated in the poem.

Kamala Das’s poetry has been examined and interpreted from different angles. For instance, Hari Mohan Prasad, disapproving of the other views of Das’ poetry like ‘a gimmick of sex’ or ‘striptease in words’, ‘an over exposure of body’ or ‘snippets of
trivia', finally asserts: "But the truth is that her poetry is an autobiography, an articulate voice of her ethnic identity, her Dravidian culture."

E.V. Ramakrishnan labels her as 'a confessional poet' and says "she has always dealt with private humiliations and sufferings which are the stock themes of confessional poetry". Eunice de Souza comments: "Kamala Das writes incessantly about love or rather the failure of the love, her unhappy personal life, her unsuccessful sexual encounters and relationships." On the other hand, A.N. Dwivedi is of the opinion that "She is aware of the world around her and gives a living expression of modern Indian woman’s thoughts and feelings." I.K. Sharma follows a different track and says: "Beneath the explosive poetry of Kamala Das... There flows a subterranean stream of bhakti heading towards its own destination to have an ideal lover, to attain higher truth like Mira."

The different views above are given to show how scholars while interpreting Das’s poetry catch hold of some isolated clue and to a certain conclusion. Any interpretation based on certain isolated feature makes its scope narrow. Kamala Das’s works of art is
experientially deep and psychologically complex. Therefore, to understand her works of art in its true form, it becomes imperative to examine it through some more valid and objective approach. Consciously or unconsciously Kamala Das has successfully tried psychoanalytical study of the human psyche.

The poet’s restlessness is voiced through Freudian search for the misplaced father figure through her works of art. She moves from man to man in search of her true home, but there is a sense of wasted effort in the prolonged search:

I no longer care
Whom I
Hurt with love and often without?
With a cheap toy’s indifference
I enter other’s
Lives, and
Make of every trap of lust
A temporary home.

(‘Glass’, The old Play-house And Others Poems, p-21)
What in poems such as 'Vrindavan' and 'Radha-Krishna' and Lines addressed to a Devadasi' is mythologized as the woman's search for Krishna the eternal lover is given in 'Glass' a clinical version as an attempt 'to look for him the "misplaced" father now everywhere."

She says, elsewhere, "I had expected him to take me in his arms and stroke my face, my hair, my hands and whisper loving words. I had expected him to be all that I want my father to be, and my mother." (My Story, p-84)

In 1970, a small book of twenty poems by Mamta Kalia was published by Writers Workshop Calcutta. The point of view is always that of a woman, sometimes ironic and aggressive. The first poem in it entitled "Tribute to Papa", begins:

Who cares for you Papa?
Who cares for your clean thoughts, clean words, clean teeth?
Who wants to be angel like you?
Who wants it?
In the whole history of Indo-English poetry, no comparable stance has been taken by any woman. Not only are the father's ideals for the daughter rejected contemptuously, but his normal way of life sneered at. For example:

When you can't think of doing anything,
You start praying,
Spending useless hours at the temple
Kamala Das shows an uncanny understanding of child psychology in her portrayal of children as in the story "A Doll for the child Prostitute". Sita's observation that her father would white-wash their house every year suggests that she would have preserved her purity.

"Every year during Diwali my father white-washed our walls with lime and powdered sand." "Where is your father?" asked Rukhmini..." He is dead.".. I(A Doll for the child Prostitute,p.28)

This echoes Kamala Das's own search for her father which she expressed in "Glass", a poem written when her father was still alive:
"I've misplaced a father
Somewhere, and I look for him now
Everywhere." (29)

Freud has convincingly shown to be universally present the death-in-life. This Freudian interpretation is in 'Summar in Calcutta' and the 'Descendants' whether consciously or unconsciously.

"In Love" speaks of:
".....the said lie
Of my unending lust."

There is the sense of a pre-conceived pattern in the image which compares each embrace to a "finished jigsaw". The Freudian equation of death-in-life is woven into the poem is not a very successful sequence dealing with the poet’s insomnia.

Kamala Das expresses her desire to die and death is ultimate truth. She says:

'I feel my age and my
Uselessness
All I want now
Is to take a long walk
Into the sea
And lie there, resting
Completely uninvolved.'

(The Old Playhouse and other poems,p.9)

In her works of art, the overwhelming sense of defeat and frustration leads to the persistent desire for death. The sea seems to invite her towards itself, as in:

Come in,

Come in, what do you lose by dying, and

Besides your losses are my gains,

('The Invitation', The descendants, p-14)

On several occasions death appeared to her as an easy escape from the loneliness of Life. The idea of suicide also haunted her frequently.

"Often I have toyed with the idea of drowning myself to be rid of my loneliness which is not unique in my way
but is natural to all. I have wanted to find rest in the sea and as escape from involvements."

(My Story, p. 215)

It is the call of love that enables her to resist the temptations of death and suicide. Kamala Das accepts the inevitability of death without trepidation.

\ldots\ldots\text{Death is}

\text{So mediocre, any fool can achieve}

\text{It effortlessly... (Death is so Mediocre)}

The perpetual restlessness and the memory of several hurts that haunt her would have led the poet to suicide as in the case of Sylvia Plath, but a sense of wisdom that comes through the essential spirituality of her life:

\text{I tell you, sea,}

\text{I have enough courage to die,}

\text{But not enough}
Not enough to disobey him
Who said: Do not die
And hurt me that certain way.

(‘The Suicide’. The Old Playhouse, p-35)

In her autobiography, Kamala Das speaks how one night, leaving her sleeping family in the room, she went up to the terrace and gazed down at the winding road below. “I wanted, for a moment, to fling myself down, to spatter the blanched brilliance of the moonlight with red blood stains” (My Story, P-104). But the sight of a mad beggar doing a solo dance under the lamp-post changed her mind. His dance seized her legs.

Suicide is more attractive because it displays determination and protest. Albert Camus said once, ‘killing yourself amounts to confessing’. The confessional poet’s fascination for suicide is not a pretense; both Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton committed suicide K.R. Ramchandran Nair points out that, “In Kamala Das the suicide-wish has always been strong but it does not precipitate because of her essentially spiritual psyche and deep sensitivity.”17
Kamala Das's works of art abounds in details of misery and grief, loneliness and helplessness, death and disease, coldness and frigidity, frustration and dejection, and all these render her vision tragic.

In 'Composition' we see another aspect of wrong knowledge of mind. After getting married the protagonist got full freedom from her husband. Initially she hesitated, but started enjoying the freedom liberally until she grew suspicious about her husband's intention behind granting her full freedom. And so she asked him:

I asked my husband
am I hetero
am I lesbian
or am I just plain frigid?
He only laughed.

Here the expression of anger is evident. The fact is that she imagines that he wanders away because she might be a hetero, a lesbian or a frigid.
She says, elsewhere, in her autobiography, "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 feel any passion for me, he asked me. I don’t know, I said simply and honestly. (My Story, p-84) Devindra Kholi asserts that, "The Dance of Eunuchs' objectifies through an external familiar situation of poet's strangled desire within...the judgment of the sterile unfulfilled, eunuch like desires of the woman within the poet," Her quest for fulfillment of love leads her only to sterility and vacant ecstasy. The poem symbolizes the "songs melancholy" of the emptiness within. It is the awareness of her feminine self of the barrenness of the passion within, which can only sing," of lovers dying and of children left unborn. "The life is "one endless stretch of infertility."

The theme of this agonized self knowledge is carried forward in almost all her poems. Bruce King comments that, in "The freaks' she "Laments a lack of deep sexual passions of the kind that go with love, together is mere appetite without feelings of intimacy"
The Old Playhouse voices her protest against the male domination and the consequent dwarfing of the feminine sensibility.

Cowering
Beneath your monstrous ego, I ate the magic loaf and Because a dwarf. I lost my will and reason, to all your Questions I mumbled incoherent replies.

Her quest for self-knowledge only leads her to the painful realization that it is an 'Old Playhouse with all its lights put out.' The conflict between passivity and rebellion against the male-oriented universe is a theme which occupies her most. How do we treat our womenfolk? In a word, badly. Our Constitution provides for equality between the sexes. Despite all the special provisions made for women, the attitudes of men have not changed. The truth is that we are today still an over-poweringly male dominated society. Poems such as "The Proud One", "Captive", "Substitute", "The Conflagration", enable us to witness the transition from passivity to rebellion. In her poems she examines the psychic disintegration which results, when self rejects established norms. The
psychological trauma frustrations and the resultant quest for identity and wholeness is a result of the revolt against male-dominated world and society. The poems reveal here feeling of anxiety, alienation, meaninglessness, futility, acute sense of isolation, fragmented self and loss of identity.

Psychology studies the concepts of the feminine and the masculine from biological and psychological points of view. Apart from the biological difference, there are well-established sex differences in several mental abilities. Masculinity and femininity are important aspects of woman’s personality. According to the results of attitude interest analysis of M-F test, males have greater self-assertion, aggressiveness, more hardiness and fearlessness and more roughness of manners, language and sentiments. On the other hand, the females are, in general, more compassionate and sympathetic, more timid, more aesthetically sensitive and more emotional.

Psychoanalysts have contributed to the study of feminine and masculine traits. Freud regards 'femininity' basically as a biological
phenomenon and studies it in the light of the standards represented by masculinity. The absence of external genitals in a woman is a central factor in his analysis of feminine character which is primarily the outcome of a girl’s discovery of her own “castration”. The feminine character-traits are indirectly expressed. Feelings of inferiority, a sense of contempt for their own sex, envy of man’s greater freedom and every kind of attempt to make up for this biological deficiency among women which puts inherent limitations on their capacities.

Freud thus claims women “as weaker in their instincts than men”. Adler shifts the emphasis from inborn biological instincts to social relationships within the family. He views the Freudian, character traits as an expression of men’s or women’s striving for power. Jung on the other hand, accepts the inner unity of the self and interprets the feminine and the masculine as complementary phenomena. He calls the feminine archetype within man’s collective unconscious “anima” and the masculine archetype within woman’s “animus”. Jung argues that, “just as the man is compensated by a feminine element (the anima): so
woman is compensated by a masculine one... her unconscious has, so to speak, a masculine imprint. This results in a considerable psychological difference between man and women." The poet presents a picture of her growing up into a woman. The agonies of growing up both physical and emotional, are expressed through a chain of metaphors.

... I wore a shirt and my
Brother's trousers, cut my hair short and ignored My womanliness.
Then a search of identity begins. Haunted by a confusion of names, she decided to stop playing or assuming a split personality.

... It is time to
Choose a name, a role. Don't play pretending games
Don't play at schizophrenia or be a Nympho.................

Sociologists attempt to study the position of women in different societies of the world from a historical point of view in order to gain a clear idea about the
'feminine' character in a particular social context. They find that subordination to man is one of the common factors of a woman's position in the social history of a number of communities.

The psycho-social approach to the 'feminine' character encourages a new awareness about woman as an artist and as an individual. Virginia Woolf links feminine writings, on the other hand, with the social situation when she says, "It is only when we can measure the way of life and the experience of life made possible to the ordinary woman that we can account for the success or failure of the writer as a woman." Patricia Spacks thinks that a woman's point of view in literature is "doubtless the result mainly of social conditioning........ Women writers have written books only during the years of their social subordination". Simone De Beauvoir interprets the secondary place of woman in different fields of life as the result of her condition which "has remained the same through superficial changes, and it is this condition that determines what is called the 'character' of woman."
Kamala Das's search for ideal love and the resultant disappointment seem to involve the psychological phenomenon of 'the animus' struggling to project the masculine imprint as interpreted by Jung. The attempt to seek in every lover the perfection of masculine being is destined to end in failure because of the impossibility of realizing the idea in human form. The poet reveals this awareness in:

I met a man, loved him. Call
Him not by any name, he is every man
Who wants a woman, just as I am every
Woman who seeks love.

(An Introduction', summer in Calcutta, p-60)

The life spent in the grandmother's house as a child symbolizes the state of innocence as contrasted with the life as a married woman symbolizing the state of experience. Her preoccupation with it echoes the subconscious anguish of the frustrated psyche to return to the state of innocence irrevocably lost, rather than a sense of "nostalgia" as interpreted by R Parthasarathy. The childhood stands for the period
Before the skin,  
Intent on survival,  
Learnt lessons of self-betrayal.  
Before the red house that had  
Stood for innocence  
Crumbled, ('Composition' The Descendants, P-29)

Kamala Das tells us that 'fed on Flaubert and Tolstoy', but 'without the beauty of their sad heroines', she was inspired to emulate them. Thus her early life was filled with day dreams of 'Opulence and luxury':

'Perhaps this was the reason for my choosing the roles of queens and princesses whenever we decided to stage a play, I liked the bewitchment of gems, silks and perfumes. In all my day dreams I saw myself as a bejewelled empress who controlled the destinies of her countrymen. Some kind of a Noor Jehan, I hated to see myself as I really was (My Story, P-50)

The elements of romanticism cling to the hard core of bitter realism derive their sustenance from the unfulfilled dreams in the subconscious.
"The Corridors" describes a recurring dream in which the author wanders along the silent corridors of a house to enter rooms filed with laughing friendly people, whose names she cannot recollect and whose relationship to her remains a mystery. There is a feeling of growing panic at her sense of being a perpetual stranger, "tramping the lost/lanes of blinded mind." Walking up from the dream, she finds that far from being surrounded by friends, she is in fact alone. It gives the poet her own limitless frenzy during her private moments.

The poet tells her lover that she didn't go to him out of mere desire for another man because she wanted to find herself. This is hardly the state of mind in which Kamala Das had entered into marriage, for she was young, inexperienced and had willed herself to be romantically in love with her husband. It is, however, a fairly typical example of her fantasy about finding salvation through love.

Her dreams mirror the actual reality of the poet's life. Her dreams become nightmarish memories of
what has been done to her, and of what may yet lie in store; the hospital corridors, the x-ray room, even aeroplanes bursting into flames in a war-torn country.

Her frequent periods of illness and nervous breakdown have made her the recipient of her husband’s protection and during such periods ‘there developed’, Kamala Das tells us ‘between myself and my husband an intimacy’ that was purely physical’. And ‘I accepted with gratitude his tenderness which was but lust, loud and savage, for it seemed like a good substitute for love.’ But more than this, it was her own body in its nakedness that she began to accept totally:

‘But during my illness, I shed my shyness and for the first time in my life learned to surrender totally in bed with my pride intact and blazing’ (My Story). Perhaps what Kamala says about one of her nervous breakdowns in her most accurate assessment of her condition: “Madness was the best escape for the unhappy girl that I was. It offered an escape more satisfying than that offered by drugs of psychoanalysis. It was an invisible armour that I wore to conceal my real life. Inside it, under the brave
smiles and braver talk, a little girl hid herself
cri
ing. Nobody could see her.” (38)

According to her, this took place when she was
about nineteen. I use the passage as a vision of
herself because it is evident that she sees herself in
more or less the same light later. Her poetry and
prose writing reaffirm in different words the substance
of the passage quoted.

The poem “The Sorcerers and exorcists of
Kattumadam” informs us that the poet suffered a nervous
breakdown at the age of nineteen as a ‘neglected wife’
and a stay in Malabar with her loved grandmother could
cure her. For a different reason, Sylvia Plath also had
suffered a similar nervous breakdown almost at the same
age,- that was due to an intense, nearly unbearable,
love for her adored father. But whereas Kamala could
be cured, Sylvia could not be.

But it is relevant to note that, whenever, the
pressure of the modern cities such as Bombay and Delhi,
where Kamala Das has lived from time to time,
increases, she turns, through a subconscious compulsion
perhaps, to such imagery for both comfort and a sense of belonging:

"I should never have walked out of my red-tiled home in Malabar around which the Westerly wind and the trees weave silken music. I should never have taken off my heavy jewellery and the white muslins. I should never have written poetry in any language but Sanskrit." (39)

Her husband could not understand her psychic and emotional needs; she could not get peace in his arms. She accuses him in "Man is a Season" and says that:

Let me toss my youth like coins into various hands
Yet let me mate with shadows
You let me sing an empty shrine, you let your wife Seek ecstasy in other’s arms.

But no man could provide her all that she needed. It gives her the sense of futility and hopelessness. She says, "I expect my men to behave like gods" (40) but none of them could ever rise to her expectations.
Kamala Das describes her mind as an old playhouse with all its lights put out. Analysing the "art" of Kamala Das is a sad business — but essentially the reviewer is satisfied with her "psychological catharsis" which Kamala provides to the reader. Meera Pillai goes to the extent of stating that the poems are "Offsprings of an emotional turmoil, the agonized, repetitious upheavals of a mind caught claustrophobically within its own boundaries."  

Kamala Das provides the reader a "psychological catharsis". A reader is satisfied with the accounts of protagonist such as extra-marital love affairs, the forbidden and uninhibited manner in which sex is treated. The readers feel their dreams come to reality. Unfulfilled desires are fruitfully satisfied when the reader places in the place of the protagonist of works of art had experienced. The reader experiences on the emotional level and gives a way to the repressed fantasy dream, lust, extra-marital love affairs through the characters of a work of art.
Sigmund Freud's many insights into the human mind, which seemed so revolutionary at the turn of the century, are now widely accepted by most scholars. He also showed that unconscious conflict plays a part in determining both normal and abnormal behaviour, and the past shapes the present. He also showed us that, while the dark and blind forces in human nature sometimes seem overwhelming, psychological understanding by enlarging the realm of reason and responsibility, can make a substantial difference to troubled individuals and even to civilization as a whole.

Building on such ideas and ideals, psychoanalysis has continued to grow and develop as a general theory of human mental functioning. New ideas have enriched the field and psychoanalytic practice has adapted and expanded. Psychoanalysis is the strongest and most sophisticated tool for obtaining further knowledge of the mind, and that by using this knowledge for greater self-awareness, patients free themselves from incapacitating suffering and improve and deepen human relationship.
One person may be plagued by private rituals or compulsions or repetitive thoughts of which no one else is aware. Some people come to analysis because of repeated failures in work or in love brought about not by chance but by self-destructive patterns of behaviour. Others need analysis because the way they are their characters substantially limits their choices and pleasures. And still others seek analysis definitively to resolve psychological problems that were only temporarily or partially resolved by other approaches.

As noted previously, Freud coined the term "Psychoanalysis" in 1956. Even today, as we entered the twenty-first century, psychoanalysis remains as a valid option for patients suffering from mental illnesses. The acceptance and popularity or psychoanalysis is innovative and revolutionary and clearly has withstood the test of time.

By far one of the greatest strength of psychoanalysis is that it is a very comprehensive theory. In the opinion of Juliet Mitchell, who argued in her first book "that a rejection of psychoanalysis
and of Freud's works is fatal to feminism, Freud thought that psychoanalysis could hardly avoid being phallocentric in a society organized along patriarchal lines; if psychoanalysis is phallocentric, it is because the human social order that it perceives refracted through the individual human subject is patrocentric. Psychoanalysis, originally intended as a theory to explain therapeutic or psychological concepts explain the nature of human development and all aspects of mental functioning. However, many experts contend that psychoanalysis can also be used to describe or explain a vast array of other concepts outside the realm of the psychological field.

Despite the weaknesses of psychoanalysis, I believe that many strengths of the theory are extremely significant. Therefore, I maintain that psychoanalysis is a theory that should not be disregarded because psychoanalysis was developed a century ago and is still considered to be a credible and effective method of treating mental illnesses. I contend that at least significant parts of the theory are accurate. Secondly, I believe that psychoanalysis is comprehensive, can be applied in practical ways, and
contains valid arguments. Finally, I believe that psychoanalysis is a substantial theory of personality because it is directly responsible for the development of additional psychological theories and hypotheses that otherwise may have been missed.

To conclude Kamala Das's 'My Story' and her poems show that she exhibits Freudian theory through her writing that women and children are educated to accept a rigidly segregated class modelled upon the sexual class that is 'Woman' through the twin mythologies of femininity and childhood physical and economic dependence, upon men, upon parents, link women and children in a common class-experience. Kamala Das shows how her parents considered her and her brother as puppets to be tugged at their will. They were considered as a responsibility to be shouldered and managed therefore, Firestone says.

'(+) he white man is father, the white woman Wife-and-mother, her status dependant on his, the blacks, like children, are his property, their physical differentiationbranding them the subservient class, in
the same way that children form so easily distinguishable a service class vis-à-vis adults. This power hierarchically creates the psychology of racism, just as, in nuclear family, it creates the psychology of sexism (pp 122-123)!  

Firestone's statement is appropriate for Indian perspective of Feminism.

Kamala Das's rebellion starts from the childhood when she confronts the white bully who pushes a pencil in her brother's nose. This rebellion is clearly brought to light when she is subjected to the bodily violence on first night of her wedding. Indian feminism is in favour of submitting to violence whereas, Kamala Das revolts against it. Andrea Dworkin, Right-Wing Women : The politics of Domesticated females says: "...a woman acquiesces to male authority in order to gain some protection from male violence (p.14).....women are kept passive and subordinate by the ever-present threat of male violence.... they display unwavering loyalty, they do
not betray any sign of dissatisfaction or resistance to male control—all in order to avoid violence against their persons...this threat of male violence is present all round each individual woman in patriarchal culture’ rape, wife beating, forced childbearing, medical butchering, sex motivated murder, sadistic psychological abuse.27.

The atrocities listed above by Dworkin, are the perspectives in Indian feminism. Kamala Das revolts against those that she encounters. Event though she could not climb out of the hold of her husband’s violence on the first night of her wedding, she exposes him for his violent gymnastics while having sex with her. She holds her husband responsible for her frigidity.

The paradoxical situation according to Dworkin is that women hang on ...“To the very persons, institutions, and values that demean her, degrade her, glorify her powerlessness, insist upon constraining and paralyzing the most honest expression of her will and being.”28
Kamala Das hangs on her marriage to save the face of her family. There are doubts in her mind whether any other person would be willing to marry her, as she was not that pretty. She puts up with the disparagement and subversive attitude of her critics when she publishes "My story" and her collection of poems and prose. Her honest will and being is expressed in creative writing. Instead of praising her for her eye-opening creative work, the male critics and her relatives indulge in demeaning activities. The essence of womanhood and her feminine Indian perspective is seen in her "loyalty to those committed to her own destruction" as the above critic puts it. Dworkin brings out the fact of Indian feminism when she says: "... the stories of female suffering, of the brutal violence that women experience, do not get told. The tellers and the stories are ignored or ridiculed, threatened back into silence or destroyed, and the experience of female suffering is buried in cultural invisibility and contempt" (p.20) How true! Kamala Das encounters exactly all that has been remarked by the critic. In India many do not approve of what she has done with her life. They do not think that Kamala Das has legitimate claim to dignity or freedom (p.21)
after all her frank and free expression and reversion to Islam and her subsequent wedding. Indian feminism will survive only when "self-loathing, fear, and humiliation are replaced by self-determination, dignity and authentic identity" (p. 35). And Kamala Das is struggling against the sea of troubles to maintain her self-determination, dignity and authentic identity.
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