Chapter III

PERSONAL CONFLICT

Protima Bedi’s personal conflict has roots in her sex consciousness. From her early teens she was obsessed with sex. She read, at an impressionable age such grown up novels as ‘Tropic of Cancer’ and ‘Tropic of Capricorn’, ‘Lolita’ and ‘Lady Chatterly’s Lover’... I was fascinated by free, wanton women in literature’ (Timepass, P. 14)

She was so sex-conscious that she was maddeningly waiting to see the boobs sprout on her bosom. The frankness with which she confesses that period of her life is mind-boggling, stunning and breath-taking. She writes ‘But the years passed and I had not sprouted boobs. The periods had not started. My sister was wearing bras at the age of twelve, and here I was flat even at sixteen. Which man would want a wife without breasts? I had a terrifying notion that women who didn’t get periods became eunuchs.. If anyone found out, they would give me away to the band of eunuchs who came singing and dancing and making obscene gestures at the men embarrassing the women and frightening the children’ (Timepass, P. 15)

To avoid this embarrassment of being a flat-chested woman what ruse did she adopt? ‘So every month I spent all my pocket money on a packet of sanitary napkins and on fixed days every month I threw out the pads. Every other girl was embarrassed by her periods, but not me. I made a bold exhibition of the fact that I was menstruating.” (Timepass, P. 15)

It was rather a case for a psychiatrist. ‘Being flat-chested was my greatest sorrow. Wouldn’t God give me at least enough to fill the smallest
How jubilant she was at her first menstruation. Mark the frankness with which she is exuberant at the beginning of her periods:

‘Then on New Year’s Day, 1965 I took off my pajamas and there was the great red stain! It was the happiest day of my life. I skipped and was quite beside myself. Of course no one could understand my euphoria. Who says that magic doesn’t happen’. (Timepass, P. 16)

And after that boobs also began to sprout. She writes as she became an exhibitionist:

‘...the breasts grew and grew, and I was so proud that I walked about with my chest thrust right for everyone to see. This pair was for real’. Her exhibitionist attitude got a snub from her mother: ‘Shameless girl!’ My mother would say, it looks so bad, why don’t you wear bras?’

Now she was strutting before the world exhibiting her charms:

‘Armed with my impressive boobs (size 37) and evidence of my womanhood – my periods – I confronted life head on’. (Timepass, P. 16)

She grudged the bras because ‘...I wouldn’t dream of enslaving and restricting that which I had yearned for so desperately. If my boobs shook about and bounced around when I walked, it was very satisfying for me’. (Timepass, P. 10)

Protima Bedi sheds all her inhibition in recounting her dancing bouts with the boys of her college ‘St. Xaviers which I joined in June 1965’. (Timepass, P. 16)

‘I was big-breasted, my waist remained tiny (like a wasp’s) and my hips filled out.’ She feels no hesitation and shame to quote what the boys termed her as: ‘I got branded as ‘chalu’ and ‘fast’ in college. What was her reaction: “I was happy being called those names because it meant that
everybody knew I had boobs. ‘She’s a real cheap, dame, yaar, she doesn’t wear bras’, some boys would say. That I could bear. But when one of the senior boys remarked, ‘They’re not real, she’s wearing falsies’, I burst into tears’. (Timepass, P. 16)

She makes no bones of her permissiveness with the boys in the college. This frankness is the hallmark of the women biographers in the West.

What a frank and forthright confession:

‘I was the sexy chick who danced with all the boys, real close. I enjoyed their discomfort immensely. How their breath would quicken, how hard they would press their thighs against mine, how surreptitiously their hands would try to brush against my breasts. I would do all I could to get them to touch the priceless pair, to feel them, caress them, squash them, kiss them’. (Timepass, PP. 16, 17)

Her most acute personal conflict with the boys of her college days was they were nincompoops who didn’t take a hint as she puts it: “...but college boys in my time were a bunch of nincompoops, scared of girls who were not scared of them. Scared to do anything that they had initiated, where they were not the seducers. I didn’t think men have changed since then’. (Timepass, P. 17)

Ever since her formative years, she ‘always wanted to be a bad-girl’. She confesses in so many words:

‘... I would rebel against everybody and everything by being a bad girl..

The servants at home called me Nirali (queer) because I never did the things that good girls my age were supposed to’. (Timepass, P. 18)

The strongest trait of Bedi was that she was a very strongly self-
willed girl. She never bothered ‘What will Mrs. Grundy say?’ She admits point blank:

‘Even in those days I was not disturbed what people thought of me. What the neighbours said or what the world felt never ever concerned me. (Just as today it doesn’t bother me if I am thought of as an immoral woman. I think I am a very good woman. I’ve always felt very good inside. Naughty yes, terribly naughty, but certainly not a bad woman)’.

(Timepass, P. 18)

This is a classic example of personal conflict. Despite her open immoral behaviour she asserts: ‘I think I am a very good woman’. (Timepass, P. 18)

After Jalal left for the States, Protima developed an affair with an Air Force pilot who had many girls. But her father being a conservative person he clipped her wings, as she writes: ‘My father, an orthodox, conservative bania at heart, was very strict about what we wore and where we went. We couldn’t wear sleeveless blouses to college’. (Timepass, P. 24)

But the daughters, Protima and her sisters found a loophole to his law.

She says ‘(My sisters and I fooled him by leaving the house with sleeved blouses worn over the sleeveless ones) and we had to be home by 7.30 in the evening, not a minute later. Going out at night for parties or dinners was out of the question’. (Timepass, P. 24)

But she had had enough of the make-believe. The real ‘fast’ woman, the profligate woman was raring to go, to rear her ugly head in her ‘self’. She is bold enough to confess, ‘I had had enough of make-believe, now I wanted the real experience. I dared to ask my father once if I could go out at night for a friend’s birthday party and he refused. He was shocked I
should even have asked such a question’. (Timepass, P. 24)

Her father’s argument was, ‘Girls from good families don’t go out at night. Wish her in the morning. If you want money to buy her a present, I’ll give it to you’. (Timepass, P. 24)

It was taboo, an anathema for the girls to go out in the night. But as her father was not an ideal or model person himself, it held no water for her. She knew her father better when she commented on his character:

‘...he said his prayers every morning, but didn’t he drink every evening. He did not smoke, but did he not gamble in the club. He often came home drunk and beat his wife, didn’t?’ As the saying goes, who live in glass houses should not throw stones at others! So had her father the cheek to admonish his daughter when he himself was not unblemished and not spotless.

Despite the spots on his character he pronounced and promulgated a draconian law for Protima. Any infringement or violation of this law meant she will not only be driven out of the house but worse ‘I’ll break both your legs’.

If the lawmakers are clever the law-breakers are cleverer, that was proved by Protima Bedi beyond the shadow of a doubt as she confessed: ‘But I had my way despite him. I would tie a long piece of string to my foot and drop the remainder of the string over the window ledge. We stayed, on the second floor. Anil and his friend Rajesh would come late in the night and switch on their headlights. Spotting the white string hanging over the ledge, they would give it a big yank. My foot would jerk up and I would come awake immediately... I would inevitably arrive at the parties when all the ‘good, decent girls’ (how stinging is the author!’) who were permitted by their parents to go for a little while were on their way out. So
I became the fast girl... as I mostly came in my night clothes or wore a kurta pajama, as though I was planning to stay the night with whoever was free’. (Timepass, P. 25, parentheses mine)

The autobiographer in Bedi doesn’t care for modesty. Take for example her escapade with the father of her girlfriend Rani. She dwells on the description of the whole episode to a great length.

Dinkie, that was the name of Rani’s father, took Protima alone to the Taj. ‘The most expensive restaurant in the town. ‘After lunch, he said he would take me to his friend’s house ‘to meet the friend’. I was a little drunk, but I knew what was on his mind...’

‘I woke up in a large bed in the friend’s house’. (Timepass, P. 27)

Being guilty conscious Dinkie apologized to Bedi ‘Forgive me I was high, and I cannot ever forgive myself for having hurt your feelings’.

Such uncles, such sugar-daddies have spoiled the lives of many girls by raping them after seducing by temptations of good dining and wining. This personal problem of the protagonist turns into a social problem looming large for innocent girls in the society.

But the girl -- the autobiographer Bedi is also equally to be blamed. Why did she encourage Dinkie, that sugar-daddy who was like her father, by virtue of being father of her girl friend Rani?

By her own admission, rather confession. ‘I met Dinkie every afternoon after that at his ‘nest’. I don’t know why I kept meeting him, since I knew that all I felt for him was physical attraction, and that too because of habit’. (Timepass, P. 28)

Her lust for sex was insatiable as she confesses: ‘I still had not felt those tremors, those rocking explosions that one is supposed to feel in sex.” (Timepass, P. 28)
Had she been a hypocrite, Protima might not have confessed her strong and excessive sexual desire. She knew full well that her frankness and forthrightness in confessing her sexual escapades would cast aspersions on her character as a lecherous and sexy woman. But she could not sacrifice honesty on the altar of purity and prudery. She did never hide her nymphomania.

Protima Bedi’s personal and family life became bitter because of Kabir’s Don Juan or Casanova-like sex-escapades with the girls from the glamorous, tinsel film life. She writes:

‘Another day, another party, and someone whispered to me that Kabir and Zeenat were having an affair... so what? I laughed.

‘It shows he’s got good taste, no’? (Timepass, P. 49)

She was sure as the saying goes, ‘curses like chickens come home to roost’, that as she hurt others in turn she too would be hurt by no other person but her own man, Kabir himself.

The root of the conflict was, as Bedi herself pointed out in her autobiography: ‘We were both looking for sex and companionship outside marriage... Perhaps he too felt the lack of being needed as a ‘man’, or perhaps he did not, and in fact, feel guilty for not having any sexual feeling for me himself. Anyway, for whatever reasons, we had stopped having sex’. (Timepass, P. 53)

It was a strange situation in Kabir-Protima relations. If Kabir was having extra-marital relationship with first Zeenat Aman and then with Parveen Bobby, Protima was almost maintaining a ménage-a-trois

1. Menage a trois, an arrangement in which three people live together, usually a married couple and the lover of one of them. (The Oxford English Reference Dictionary, Oxford, N.Y., 1995, P. 902)
relationship with Fred Seigfred Kinzel the German engineer. And it was doubted that Siddharth was an outcome of this relationship with Fred.

Kabir was bold enough to have affair with Gita (fictitious name) under his own roof. He and Gita were ‘locked in a tight embrace behind the cupboard in our living room, kissing each other hungrily’.

Protima says ‘Gita had come to stay with us for a month. Another night I woke up and found them together in her bedroom, and he said he was giving her water to drink’. (Timepass, P. 66)

But the cat was out of the bag rather belatedly. Bedi writes, ‘It was only some years later, after Kabir and I had separated, that Gita told me that they had been having an affair since the time I was pregnant with Pooja. Gita had become pregnant and Kabir had asked her to abort the child’.

Until that time she had been utmost faithful to Kabir. Hence being shocked was natural on her part as she says, ‘That had stunned me. When I hadn’t had a single affair, when I was still the faithful wife, he had been cheating on me. (Timepass, P. 67)

How this conflict in the conjugal life of a woman might have wracked her brain, is a matter of imagination. Small wonder she too took recourse to infidelity to her husband, as if paying him in the same coin.

And Kabir had the cheek to tell Protima that the boot was on the other leg. ‘And he had always drummed into me if I had not looked at another man he would never have looked at another woman. He had started it all—creeping out of the bedroom while I was fast asleep to screw Gita in the living room. She was only sixteen then and a virgin. But he always projected himself as the wronged one, and I suffered terrible guilt’. (Timepass, P. 67)
Kabir was clever enough to hide his sexual affair under subterfuge.

‘I dropped Kamala and Gayatri home and on the way back I hit two road-dividers’. (Timepass, P. 67)

But the next day when she accused him again ‘he admitted that he had spent the night with Gayatri’.

In Nepal, during a film shooting Kabir fell in love with Nasreen the famous beauty queen. Bedi writes about this girl, ‘She was not sensitive or deep enough to hold his attention outside bed; he was having sex with her almost every time he met her’. (Timepass, P. 71)

Despite his avowal ‘there could never be another woman for him after Sarah’, but Protima was sure ‘but I knew there would be…’ (Timepass, P. 71)

Despite all amenities and comforts – a handsome husband, beautiful children, a home with servants, a car, friends, glamour and fame, ‘Yet there was a restlessness growing within me. The quest for enjoyment was beginning to seem futile’. (Timepass, P. 87)

It was a dark patch of her life, as she herself reveals: ‘Emotionally I was a mess. I started smoking too much, drank a hell of a lot and because it was the age to defy society, to walk around practically naked, to practice free love, I did that too. I did not know what it was to be shy. I would take off my clothes for anybody’. (Timepass, P. 87) Such horrids are for us, but not for her!

The things had come to such a pass that she felt even if she found the divine truth ‘The Cosmic Truth’, ‘What could I do with it?’ What would it solve?’ (Timepass, P. 87)

Parveen Bobby comes as a wedge between Protima and Kabir. After her return from Orissa where she had gone for dance course, Kabir
received her at the airport. They took their dinner together. While she was getting ready for sleeping with Kabir after a long separation, Kabir shocked her with the announcement. “I’ll be going over to Parveen’s, see you in the morning.” My heart thumped. I refused to believe I had heard right. I knew he was having an affair with Parveen even before I’d left for Orissa, but his wanting to go to her on the very night I had returned shattered me’. (Timepass, P. 99)

When she protested his callous behaviour with his wife he said point-blank: ‘I’m going to spend the night with her and I want you to know that in future I’ll be spending all my nights there’. (Timepass, P. 100)

To a great extent Protima herself is responsible for her broken home by encouraging her husband Kabir to carry illicit relations known as ‘affair’ with Parveen Bobby.

To make the matters worse she gave an ultimatum ‘either he left or I did’ (Timepass, P. 105) Kabir pounced upon the opportunity as he was waiting for the same. When she realized her folly she wanted to take back the ultimatum but it was too late to mend. The die was cast.

Then she resigned to fate, to dree the weird and told Parveen, ‘Kabir is yours, yours completely. I don’t want him back ever...’ (Timepass, P. 108)

Parveen was so possessive of Kabir that she couldn’t brook even the idea of sharing him with Bedi.

The green-eyed monster to use a cliché for jealously had wracked and ruined the life of Protima as Parveen went to Rome along with Kabir. Protima laments that Kabir would not have done this sort of favour to her for the release of Sandokan. (Timepass, P. 111)

The earth slipped under her feet when Kabir declared that the flat in
which she was living would go to Kabir’s sister Guli, ‘because the housing society will not accept you as a landlady and a member of their committee’. (Timepass, P. 113)

Protima was however wise enough to keep her trump card close to her chest, she didn’t sign the divorce papers sent by Kabir. And when she signed the papers Kabir had lost to cherish or savour the divorce for Parveen had already partred ways from him.

Divorce from Kabir left Protima with a broken home for her children.

Though Kabir ‘had caused a lot of pain’ but she was always smiling sweetly and posing a ‘yes’ person for form’s sake. She was leading a double life. She was burning inside due to mental toture meted out to her by Kabir.

But to her children she painted Kabir as a saint. She writes about it as follows: ‘I had painted Kabir as almost a saint, defending all that he did, because he was father of my children. Tainting him would have affected the children and their relationship with him in a negative way. I cared too much for them to let my pain and anger show’. (Timepass, P. 142)

In fact Kabir had deserted her (their) children. But if Kabir had possessed Susan she had possessed Jasraj about whom she comments: ‘and I too had a man whom I could trust. Jasraj, for all his faults, mattered a lot to me because he loved me dearly, even when I did not always love him as much’. (Timepass, P. 143)

When she was not divorced from Kabir under one roof there was a triangle or ménage a trois – Protima, Kabir and Zeenat Aman then Protima, Kabir and Parveen; Kabir, Protma and Fred, the German engineer.

Now Kabir was married to Susan, the American, the one couple and
Protima with Jasraj, the another couple.

As Bedi confesses in so many words: "Jasraj was still my heart and my soul. And yet, though I saw the depths of my love for him, there was always a distance between us’. (Timepass, P. 144)

So, was it a Platonic love between the two – between Protima and Jasraj?

The family feuds between Protima and Kabir were very common. So were the irritations between his American wife Susan and himself.

Despite divorce from Kabir whenever Bedi met him they had sex and then ensued a quarrel. Once she picking a quarrel with him said; ‘You’re a great guy, but as an actor you’re a ham. A first class ham. So long as the camera concentrates on your good looks, it’s okay. And don’t talk of creativity. You may have ideas but they’re unoriginal. What creative thing have you done?’

Kabir reacted sharply: ‘His eyes flickered and I saw the anger that I know so well and feared. ‘What are you talking about? Have you read my scripts? You haven’t seen any of my latest movies, either... I think I have great talent and I am a very creative person’, he said (Timepass, P. 185)

But Protima still insisted ‘You’re mediocre’.

Such acerbities often cropped up between them poisoning their personal lives and rankling their memories.

As Protima traduced Kabir of being a ‘ham’ and a ‘mediocre’ so did Kabir by finding fault with her dancing and her recital. A case in point is her performance at Bhopal which was viewed by Susan and Kabir both.

She didn’t like the familial life for the sake of family. Sex being her greatest obsession she didn’t care for a shattered family life or a broken home. She was possessive of Kabir only for ulterior motive that is for ‘the
selfish reasons’ such as to ‘crow about her catch of such a fascinating personage’. According to her confession she says: ‘It seemed at such times that I used all my relationships for my own selfish reasons. I wanted to be Kabir’s wife so that I could crow about my catch to the world: I was the sexy siren, the beautiful one who had landed the best man and I wanted every one to envy me. And with Jasraj, wasn’t it a total power trip. Only I could seduce the moral, clean sage, change his ways and his thoughts... And all the other men in my life were there because I needed something or the other from them -- fun, excitement, sexual pleasure, some cheap thrill’. (Timepass, P. 198)

But it was different with Mario. From him she ‘would expect nothing, only love’. (Timepass, P. 198)

Protima was a breaker of homes by enmeshing a man in the dragnet of her love. She was repeating the lovegame, this once with poor Mario who was happily married with four children. How mercilessly she relates this preying upon poor Mario: ‘So it was the old merry-go-round once again. Precious Mario married happily for fifteen years with four children, and now because of me his life was being thrown into turmoil. I had asked him not to tell. I wanted him, but I certainly did not want the guilt’. (Timepass, PP. 198, 199)

And why did she want him so vehemently?

She wanted even to marry him. Why? By her own admission: ‘He was the kind of man I had wanted to live with always – the sporty, outdoor man, direct and unspoilt by social graces. It was easy to love him. And we had fabulous sex, the best I had ever given and got’. (Timepass, P. 199).

Meanwhile she came into contact with Manu but she resisted his
advances because she was in love with Mario. She asked him in all earnestness: ‘Manu, can I be your friend without being your woman?’

Protima Bedi’s frequent changing of boyfriends had made her and her children’s life miserable.

When she developed her sexual relations with Mario it was as if hell broke loose. Mario was like a jealous mistress. When Kabir came to dinner his grouse with Bedi was ‘You always end up talking about Kabir?’ (Timepass, P. 210) Then she was upset as she says, ‘I was quite exasperated by now’.

However she short-shrifthim by curtly retorting, ‘If I’m hung up on Kabir, then you’ll just have to accept that’. (Timepass, P. 211)

Then, while she was in Madras, Mario came post haste from Bombay to pick up a quarrel about an Italian lover of Protima from Italy. As if the fury itself burst forth from Mario’s lips: ‘When you were saying how much you loved me, you fucked Robertino in Rome! How could you!’ (Timepass, P. 212)

Her explanation to clarify her positon did not satisfy Mario. At which she shrugged her shoulders nonchalantly and insouciantly: ‘So what if I had slept with Robertino?’

Like a juggler who keeps several balls at one and the same time in the air, she maintained sex-relations with many lovers at one and the same time. But sometimes due to this sexual jugglery she overreached herself.

A case in point is her telephonic talk with Manu in the presence of Mario. Mario, taking exception to it brushed her off: ‘Kish, I don’t like him. He’s a fraud. Anyone who occupies the ministerial position must be corrupt.”
And the way he phones you is very sneaky and corrupt’. (Timepass, P. 215)

But Mario’s labelling Manu as a fraud was a case of pot calling the kettle black. For, subsequently, he was caught trying to have sex with Protima’s daughter Pooja Bedi Ebrahim which resulted in strained relations between Protima and Mario and in the course of time severance of relationship altogether.

Mario’s presence in Bedi house had caused souring of relations between Protima and Pooja. The bitter argument between mother and daughter had caused bad blood. To her face Pooja blamed her mother for frequently changing her boyfriends.

While Protima was in Birwil (Switzerland) and her children were under the care of Mario, one night Mario tried to have sex with Pooja. She came to know about it when she returned from Birwil as Pooja divulged Mario’s nasty affair. Protima narrates: “In 1985 I was in Birrwil, and the kids were in Bombay with Mario. The night before the children were to return to their school in Sanawar, Mario tried to act funny with Pooja. She told me about it the next morning when I called from Birrwil. (Timepass, P. 222) The relation began to sour leading to total severance between Bedi and Mario.

Protima by striking sexual partnership with many men was like sowing wind hence she had to reap whirlwind. Kabir, Dinkie, Jalal, Jean Jacques, Fred of Germany, Jasraj, Manu, Robertino in Rome – she had sexual relations with them all she was trying to seduce even Marc Zuber. She was such a great seductress who seduced dexterously.

Protima Bedi passed from crisis to crisis. At the Nrityagram dance school Guru Kelucharan’s son Shibu had turned like Sindbad’s Old Man of
the Sea. He had become such a problem for her that it was difficult rather impossible to brush him off the institute of Nrityagram. He was a cross that she had to bear for the sake of her Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra. The troupe was going to perform in the States and Shibu was a misfit to be accompanied there. But the Guruji, (father of Shibu) was adamant, obdurate and obstinate that "if any student of his went to USA with me in place of his son, he would not touch him in future. It was outright blackmail'. (Timepass, P. 259, 260)

In short he was like a pillory around her neck. But when it became indispensable she threw Shibu out of Nrityagram as she describes:

‘But after all this, I had to throw Shibu out of Nrityagram, especially since his behaviour as a Guru had become dictatorial... Though he might have been a good teacher’, she asserted ‘but I was more interested in having a good human being’. (Timepass, P. 240) But this ‘operaton’ resulted in the strained relations between Protima and her guru...’ but now he had disowned me because of a son whom he himself knew to be not the best of men’. (Timepass, P. 261)

Her son, her own ‘flesh and blood’ Siddharth was a problem child who gave Protima a hell of a torment. He suffered from schizophrenia. Reading about an Air India jumbo crashing into the sea he took ‘The episode personally, identifying with the crash victims and feeling their agony and pain’. (Timepass, P. 280) I am reminded of an Urdu couplet by an eminent poet, Ameer Minai:

\[\text{Khanjar chale kisi pe tadapte hain hum Ameer/Saare jahan ka dard hamare jigar mei hai!}\]

(Someone is stabbed with a dagger, it is I who wince, Ameer
The agony of the whole world is in my heart!)
Siddharth asked Protima heart-rending questions about the dead as he read ‘Tibetan Book of the Dead’.

While she was going to Goa by air he tried to dissuade his mother from taking the flight for fear of death in a plane crash.

He asked, ‘How will we get your body if you died in a plane crash?’

His concern for her makes him dearer in the eyes of Protima: ‘I was amused and touched by his concern for his duty and his love for me’. (Timepass, P. 282)

He bared his soul to his mother in the letters he wrote to her from America.

Once he wrote “I can see that I’d be a good ‘goat-herder’… (Timepass, P. 283)

Writing about the knowledge he was acquiring, he says, ‘This knowledge will make my ‘Timepass’ more enjoyable. At least it will add some jazz, mirch masala and curiosity to my years of ‘Timepass’. Good concept this ‘Timepass’ – it exonerates you of any guilt you might feel for not doing anything truly ‘meaningful’ in your life’. (Timepass, P. 283) Perhaps title of the book is borrowed from this passage.

He was a pessimist who always thought of death. Protima writes, ‘He often wrote about death and dying’. (Timepass, P.283) Perhaps it was a premonition of death.

Death-wish has predominantly occupied his thoughts. He wrote to her mother about ‘love’. ‘But even in such letters sometimes he would reflect on death: ‘My good friend George’s father died a week ago… Boy, life really gives you the upper-cut sometimes’. (Timepass, P. 284)

Bedi writes, ‘The Presidential elections were happening that year and he liked Clinton. ‘If he had to cast in his lot’, he said, ‘it would be for
Clinton’. (P. 285) His raison d’etre for his preference for Clinton are interesting: ‘He admits to having smoked marijuana, he appears on TV playing the saxophone, and has also admitted to cheating on his wife. Finally an honest candidate’. (Timepass, P. 285)

Siddharth was giving no end of trouble to his mother. His restlessness rather unrest was manifest through his letters and phone calls. Protima employs the phrase ‘at sea’ about his condition of depression, perplexity and condition. In her letters to Siddharth she poured out her heart. The dream sequence in which her son is killed in a car accident sends her into deep frenzy and torments her to no end. (Timepass, P. 287)

‘When he came to India he was suffering from ‘major mood shifts’ and ‘spells of depression’. (Timepass, P. 289)

To make the matters worse, he read the book ‘The Road Less Travelled’ to which Protima Bedi took strong exception.

Here she expressed her strong antagonism towards Christianity and Islam. The author Scott Peck was in a very subtile and subtle manner -- rather cunningly preaching Christianity which she didn’t like being a staunch Hindu. In her view the Book and its author were a bad influence on her son, Siddharth.

To be over-frank and oversmart she, in a letter revealed, ‘everything about my affair with Fred Kinzel and the uncertainty for some years about who his father was’. (Timepass, P. 294)

It was rather unwise though her intention was good: ‘I thought that it would perhaps help him sort out some of the questions that occupied his mind’. (Timepass, P. 294)

But as she had sowed wind, she had to reap whirlwind. ‘He was
nasty to both Pooja and me. He had categorically told me many a time that he had no desire to see me or to talk to me’. (Timepass, P. 295)

Then he left for the States. ‘Fifteen days later the Canadian police picked him up on the streets of Montreal and he was in the state hospital for days’. (Timepass, P. 296)

The fruit of her affair with Fred Kinzel which fructified in Siddharth proved to be her nemesis. She wanted to go to USA.

‘But he wouldn’t have me near him. Why did he hate me?’ Perhaps, the wages of her sin’. (Timepass, P. 296)

And the denouement was the tragic death of Siddharth by committing suicide. ‘Siddharth committed suicide in Los Angeles on 19 July 1997’. (Timepass, P. 296)

He wrote a pathetic suicidal note which rent the heart of the mother.

Her pain, her agony, her anguish were indescribable. ‘The guilt of not knowing my son – what made his heart beat faster, what his aims, his dreams were all about. I cried alone, I died every moment in flashback’. She could not escape the twinge of conscience. ‘Had I been such a negligent mother? Had I put too much energy into loving men, when I should have given to my children. The guilt was immense’. (Timepass, P. 298)

She could not escape the torment and torture of conscience as she put it: ‘But my mind came in the way of my peace. I could not run away from my mind’. (Timepass, P. 298)

She was so terribly obsessed with her dead son that when the sun and the wind caressed her eyes she had the illusion that it was her own son, her Shonoo, her Siddharth. Sometimes she was in such a tight grip of
pessimism, the melancholy that ‘I was close to ending my life. The despair was great. But I neither had the courage nor the conviction for such a deed’. (Timepass, P. 299)

By the suicide of Siddharth the Fates had played their game with the poor boy and indirectly with the mother, autobiographer Protima Bedi.

In the words of Thomas Hardy at the execution of Tess of the d’Urbervilles: ‘Justice’ was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean\(^1\) phrase, had ended his sport with Tess’.\(^2\) In his novel ‘Tess of the d’Urbervilles’, Hardy alluded to Shakespeare’s\(^3\) oft-quoted lines:

1. **Aeschylus: Greek Dramatis.** The earliest writer of Greek tragic drama whose works survive, he is best known for his trilogy the Oresteia(458BC) consisting of Agamemnon, Choephoroe, and Eumenides. These tell the story of Agamemnon’s murder at the hands of his wife Clytemnestra and the vengeance of their son Orestes. Aeschylus is distinguished by the scale and grandeur of his conceptions. He departed from tradition by giving more weight to dialogue than to choral song and in adding a second actor to the existing one plus chorus.

2. In the preface of Tess of the d’Urbervilles, Thomas Hardy writes: "True, it may have some local originality; though if Shakespeare were an authority on history, which perhaps he is not, I could show the sin was introduced into Wessex as early as the Heptarchy itself. Says Glo’ster in Lear, otherwise Ina King of that country:
As flies to wanton boys are we to gods; They kill us for their sport. Tess of the d’Urbervilles A Pure Woman Faithfully presented by Thomas Hardy Macmillan and Co. Ltd. London, 1965 P. VIII ‘Justice’ was done and President of the Immortals in Aeschylean Phrase had ended his sport with Tess. Ibid P. 446

3. **William Shakespeare, King Lear**
Shakespeare: William Shakespeare: (also known as 'the Bard of Avon' (1564-1616) English dramatist. He was born a merchant’s son in Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire and married Ann Hathway in about 1582. Some time thereafter he went to London, where he pursued a career as an actor, poet and dramatist. He probably began to write for the stage in the late 1580s; although his plays were widely performed in his lifetime, many were not printed until the First Folio of 1623. His plays are written mostly in blank verse and include comedies (e.g. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *As You Like It*); historical plays, including Richard III and Henry V; the Greek and Roman plays, which include Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra; the so-called ‘problem plays’, enigmatic comedies which include *All’s Well that Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*; the great tragedies, *Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth*; and the group of tragicomedies with which he ended his career, such as *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest*. He also wrote more than 150 sonnets, published in 1609, as well as narrative poems such as *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594)
“As flies are to wanton boys are we to the gods;
They kill us for their sport!”

Protima, ironically enough, in the last chapter of her autobiography entitled Sanyas makes the mention of one more victim of the spider. She caused one more home broken. This time the poor victim is one Harish Futnani aka Bheeshma (he had changed his name and was no longer Harish). (Timepass P. 312) It may not be deemed impertinent how she prepares the ground for this lover’s infatuation rather distraction for her: ‘In our dance, we learn from poetry that when Krishna plays his flute, the gopis slip away from their homes, uncaring of their husbands, their in-laws and their society, for they cannot ignore a call from their beloved. The man, Harish Futnani, had prayed to all his gods and goddesses for years for me’.

In fact he said ‘I was a living incarnation of his Goddess the fruit of all his meditation. He was totally and irrevocably committed to my happiness and well-being. It was his sacred duty to serve me’. (Timepass, P.302)

They say old habits die hard. Despite ‘the symptoms of menopause’ (Timepass, P.305) sex was a dominant factor in her life. Though she camouflages this in such passages:

‘...but I don’t mean to let you have sex with me in future’. The irony of the ironies is that she neither gives her body to him (Harish) in sex nor allows him to have sex with any other woman. The dog in the manger attitude. She admits ‘it is ridiculous – I don’t want it, but I won’t let you have it elsewhere either’, I said to Harish, when he called next’. (Timepass, P.305)

She takes pride in pronouncing:

‘...He loved me so much that he would give up his wife and children
for me...’ (Timepass, P303)

Try though she did to shake him off but to no avail. He was adamant in his love for her. She had bewitched him bordering on madness and distraction.

Poor fellow dancing to her tunes had abandoned his wife and children. Protima appears like a monstrosity, the avatar of Kali that causes wrack and ruin to one more home – this once poor Harish Futnani’s wife and children.

The contradictions are galore in her character. She asks Harish ‘...will you please release me?’ (Timepass, P.306) But he doesn’t want to let her go. Perhaps due to the force of undertow of sex. He might have come of use when she was on heat also known as oestrus or oestrum (recurring period of sexual receptivity)

Under the twinge of conscience she feels herself guilty and woe-begone.

“How dare he make me feel guilty about another break-up.”

When he loved her too much she reacts: ‘The devotion of that man was great. It humbled me, it humiliated me’.

‘Don’t love me so much’, I cried, ‘I don’t deserve any of this . It’s too much for me. Find yourself someone more deserving’.

But, the response of Harish, an enigma of a man was: ‘You are my Goddess’, he repeated for the millionth time.

‘I have meditated all these years to find you. There is not a single moment when you don’t exist in my mind’. (Timepass, P.307)

See for yourself a few vignettes of Harish’s mad love for Protima: ‘When I came from hospital Harish called... ‘I’m tired’ I said, ‘I just want to sleep’. So he asked me to put the receiver next to my pillow and go to
sleep. He wanted to hear me, breathe, snore, shuffle, everything’. (Timepass, P.308)

And whenever she awake with interregnum at 2 a.m. at 4 a.m. and then ‘at 8 a.m. ...he was still on the phone’. (Timepass, P.308). He didn’t sleep a wink. He was such a devoted and dedicated lover. Bedi reveals: ‘...he decided to abandon all that he knew and take sanyas. He asked me about it. ‘So much courage. Where do you get it from? I said’.

‘This much hint was sufficient: ‘He wrote letters to his mother and wife, handing over to them his business and all his belongings’ (Timepass, P.310)

And left to accompany his love Protima Bedi to holy places in the foot of Himalayas, ‘camping by the Ganga, cuddling in our tent, unafraid, free and happy’.

Here religion is intermingled with sex. An aspect of Hinduism is seeking spiritual pleasure through sexual pleasure. (Rajneesh is a case in point) The famous Urdu poet from Aurangabad Wajd wrote his famous couplet about the art of Ajanta frescoes, (tr.) ‘The nudity is living by the prop of sacredness. (Holiness is in the garb of nudity).

She returned alone but her heart throbbed with the fear “What if he died?” But she heaved a sigh of relief as Harish, talked to her by phone. Once more they were together even in bed. She confesses: “I lazed in bed, fusses and cribbed just to feel like a spoilt brat. I received a lot of love, physical and emotional. (Timepass P. 313)

He had gone even to the extent of “…staring at me in my sleep, massaging my feet, caressing me with his looks. Cant lose a moment, ‘ he says ‘I have to get my fill of you’. (Timepass, P.314)

There was a forewarning, a premonition of death. ‘Where is life
taking me? Am I to have an enlightened death? I dream of my death often’. (Timepass, P.314)

Protima left on a pilgrimage to Kailash-Mansarovar.

‘She died on the way, on 17 August, 1998 in a landslide’. (Timepass, P.314)

The afterward by Pooja Bedi, Protima Bedi’s daughter, sheds light on her death in a landslide: ‘On the night of 17 August her group camped at Malpa, Pithoragarh... It was raining heavily and the landslide occurred very late at night. They were all asleep. Death was instantaneous’. (Timepass, P. 318)

She died as she wished. (She) used to wince at the thought of dying a common, painful death and being burned in some soulless crematorium. Well I guess she had her way even in death’. (Timepass, P. 319) For her who wallowed throughout her life in sexual sin, the death was an ideal one. Famous Urdu poet Ghalib has said in a famous couplet:

\[
\textit{Huwey hum jo mark ke ruswa,}
\textit{Huye ky\text{" o}n na gharge darya}
\textit{Na kahin janaza uthta}
\textit{Na kahin mazar hota}^1
\]

(We invited infamy in death. Had we met with a watery grave neither there would have been a funeral procession nor a grave (to point out at our shame).^2

Thus she also was spared of a funereal exhibition of her death or any samadhi as an infamous reminder’.

Personal Conflict in Kamala Das's Life:

\[
1. \textit{Quoted from Diwan-e-Ghalib (Ghalib in his Diwan- Collection)}
2. \textit{True translation mine.}
\]
Now turning to the personal conflict in the life of another protagonist of our thesis Kamala Das it will be worth our while to investigate about her problem which had troubled her from the very union of her parents.

She writes about her parents:

‘My mother did not fall in love with my father. They were dissimilar and horribly mismated (mismatched?). But my mother’s timidity helped to create an illusion of domestic harmony which satisfied the relatives and friends’. (*My Story* P. 3 parentheses mine). It was a make-believe arrangement between her parents who had no love lost between them.

Kamala further writes:

‘Out of such an arid union were born the first two children, my brother and I, bearing the burden of a swarthy skin and ordinary features. (*M.S. P. 5*)

They weren’t the apples of their parent’s eyes as she writes:

“We must have disappointed our parents a great deal. They did not tell us so, but in very gesture and in every word it was evident. It was evident on the days when my father roared at us and struggled to make us drink the monthly purgative of pure castor oil.

This used to be one of our childhood nightmares, the ordeal of being woken out of sleep before dawn to have the ounce-glass thrust into our mouths and rough hands holding our lips closed so that we swallowed the stuff and sank back on our pillows with tears of humiliation streaming from our eyes…” (*My Story* P. 5)

The result was a sort of inferiority complex developed in their psyches.

‘Gradually our instincts told us to keep away from the limelight, to hide in the vicinity of the kitchen where we could hold together the tatters
of our self-respect and talk to the scavenger or the gardener...’ (My Story, P.5)

The credit goes to the strong will of Kamala Das that despite such a suppressing and repressing childhood she emerged as a poet of such eminence.

Kamala could not compromise with the Fates that thrust her upon the Indian parents or vice versa.

‘I wondered why I was born to Indian parents instead of to a white couple who may have been proud of my verses’. (My Story, P.9)

According to Shirley Geok-lin Lim “In her Preface, Das locates the origin of her autobiography in the confessional impulse attending the death bed. She indicates that the autobiography was written during her “first serious bout with (sic) ¹ heart disease” and that she “wanted to empty myself of all the secrets so that I could depart when the time came with a scrubbed out conscience.” This intention indicates a particular understanding of the autobiographical genre one attuned to the confessional tradition of Christianity exemplified in Augustine’s Confessions. The expressed wish for a “scrubbed-out conscience” itself prepares the reader for representations of ‘sinful’ and immoral subjects, secrets that defile a conscience, and for some kind of remorse undertaken within a religious or spiritual frame of reference. ²

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Kamala Das is a congenital, storyteller – a good raconteur. At her father’s place there was a character Aubery Menon who receives a letter from his son reading that his old wife was dying. He sends money telegraphically. But when she recovers he was in towering rage, shouting: ‘That good for nothing hag, cheated me of a neat hundred. If she decides to die after a few months how will I be able to raise another hundred for the funeral... (My Story, P.52) ‘Why didn’t she die at the proper time’, he asked me…”

The story of the rich widow of the Bhowal Sanyasi fame case reads like a sensational thriller. Her husband died very young at a hill-station. Then appeared a hermit – a sadhu with a concocted story that the pall-bearers ran away leaving the half-lit pyre as the rains took them over all of a sudden. A sanyasi (hermit anchorite) took him to his ashram (hermitage). But later he returned to Calcutta to claim his widow and the share of his property. The lady flatly refused to accept the ‘imposter as her husband. The sanyasi filed a suit and while the case was sub judice he fell ill and died’. (My Story, P. 53) The autobiography is dotted with such anecdotes exhibiting her art of story-telling about the events of real life.

Like every girl of marriageable age Kamala dreamt of marrying ‘a rich man, a zemindr (landlord) and live on in the city of Calcutta’. (My Story, P.55)

Sadness in the eyes of Bengali heroines made them more attractive in the eyes of the heroes. Kamala says ‘I too tried to look sad, but it was a difficult task for there were so many things that made me burst into laughter, and the world seemed so young, so happy, so full of promise’. (My Story, P.62)

One of the personal complexes of Kamala Das was that she had
never been considered as an independent entity of her own self. ‘They (her parents) took us for granted and considered us mere puppets, moving our limbs according to the tugs they gave us’. (My Story, P.74)

It never occurred to them the girls too ‘had personalities that were developing independently, like sturdy shoots of the bunyan growing out of crevices in the walls of ancient fortresses’. (My Story, P.74)

The imagery of a bunyan adventitious roots for growing girls could have been the work of only a poet of high calibre. Kamala writes poetry in prose.

Kamala’s personal conflict manifests itself nowhere else as prominently as in her betrothal to her cousin against her will. When her fiancé was invited to Calcutta by her father her reaction was ‘I watched him with distaste’. (My Story, P.83)

How graceless, nay, brutal was he she depicts as follows: ‘Whenever he found me alone in a room, he began to plead with me to bare my breasts and if I did not, he turned brutal and crude. His hands bruised my body and left blue and red marks on the skin’. (My Story, P.84) Kamala is no less frank and forthright than Protima Bedi, our other biographer, author of Timepass.

He was such a tactless fellow that to his fiancée, ‘He told me of the sexual exploits he had shared with some of the maidservants in his house in Malabar’. (My Story, P.84)

Interestingly enough, she expected her husband to be a father and a mother rolled in one. She asserts, ‘Sex was far from my thoughts. I had hoped that he would remove with one sweep of his benign arms, the loneliness of my life…’ (My Story, P.84)

What she couldn’t tell her father ‘That I had hoped for a more
tranquil relationship with a hand on my hair and a voice in my ear... I had no need at all for rough hands riding up my skirts or tearing up my brassiere’. (My Story, P.84)

Desparingly she said, as if resigned to fate, that 'what cannot be cured should be endured:'

'My life had been planned and its course charted... I was to be the victim of a young man’s carnal hunger...' Her opinion about the cheap drudgery at her husband’s place as a housewife was: 'I would wash my husband’s cheap underwear and hang it out to dry in the balcony like some kind of a national flag, with wifely pride...’ (My Story, P. 85)

How ironic and sarcastic she waxes!

As a prelude to her wedding she had an affair rather a brush with an 18-year old young man. She writes adoringly about him: 'I felt beautiful when he was with me arranging my limbs shyly with a blush pinking his cheeks'. (My Story, P.85)

Both were the unhappy souls. 'He was unhappy at home. He found in me a kindred soul'. (My Story P. 86)

Marriage, though lavish with gladrags and sumptuous dishes made Kamala Das feel 'Cheap'. (My Story P. 87) Her opinion about the marriage shows her high-thinking: 'Marriage meant nothing more than a show of wealth to families like our.' (My Story P. 87)

'The bride' for the parents and others, 'was unimportant and her

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1. As a language point it might not be impertinent to note that pink is not used as a verb in that sense. It is only Noun or Adjective; pinking as a verb means 'emitting of high pitched sounds by an engine'. (The Oxford English Ref. Dictionary Oxford N.Y. OUP, 1995, PP. 1101/1102)
happiness a minor issue. There was nothing remotely Gandhian about my wedding’. (My Story P.87)

Kamala was not a sex-hungry girl belonging to common rabble and riffraff womenfolk. She vividly depicts her husband's savage attacks to deflower her, ‘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... The rape was unsuccessful’. (My Story P. 89)

Then with a savage candour and frankness she told him 'I was perhaps not equipped for sexual congress. Perhaps I am not normal, perhaps I am only eunuch...' (My Story, P. 90) ‘And with breath-taking candour, she admits putting it even on paper in black and white: ‘I remained a virgin for nearly a fortnight after my marriage’. This attribute of frankness which is the speciality of the western woman had made an Indian woman also susceptible, thanks to the influence of the autobiographies of Western women who didn’t hide anything – from kiss to the sexual intercourse.

The life became miserable for her in a Bombay flat. ‘One day I fainted in the bathroom and lay there on the damp floor for a while... (Timepass, P.91)

She grew weak with vomitings because of her pregnancy. She soon tore herself away form ‘the man who did not learn to love me, I went to Malabar...’

There in her native Malabar she met with greatest pleasure of creativity. ‘One day I felt a quickening in my womb and knew that my child had become a live being’. (My Story, P.92)

Her joy knows no bounds as Monoo is born to her. She says, ‘The best toy that can be given to a teenaged girl is a live baby...’
She wanted to look her son like the great romantic poet Byron, after all she too was a poet of a high calibre. 

The child was so dear to her that even the defect in his foot was dear to her.

A complex and queer character was her husband who didn’t cast a glance at her. Hence becoming rather vindictive she too extracted pleasure by watching a handsome bricklayer, who was working at the site where her father was getting a new house constructed. (My Story, P. 95)

Hungry for sex, she was ready to make love with the handsome boy. She admits: ‘I was ready for love. Ripe for a sexual banquet’. (My Story, P.95)

Such was the urge for sex that she was ready to entrust her body to anybody. Hence, ‘A cousin of ours one day grabbed me when I was climbing the stairs whispering, “You are so beautiful.” In sheer gratitude I let him hold me in his arms... He panted with his emotion. When he kissed me on my mouth I disliked the smell of his stale mouth’. (My Story, P. 96)

Unless one reads in black and white one cannot believe the ordeal Kamala Das – a writer of repute and a poet – went through as a subject to her mother-in-law’s pinpricks and husband’s torturing behaviour. Whenever she said disgruntled things my husband grew angry, and his anger was directed against me and the baby. (My Story, P. 98)

The things came to such a pass that ‘one day I sent the cook to a chemist’s shop for a dozen tablets of barbiturates... The cook, on his return empty-handed, told me with tears in his eyes, that he too would take some tablets if I decided to kill myself. Then the maidservant came up to me and said that she was planning to get run over by a bus’. (My Story, P. 98) The husband was such a despot that ‘he... stopped me from
going up to the terrace."

Such is the lot of a woman however enlightened and a gifted person she might be. At long last the relief came when they were sent back to Malabar for here in Bombay they felt suffocated and asphyxiated. Despite her sorrows and woes her observation of her environs and surroundings is keen. Describing the king of bootleggers just opposite her house she weaves this story:

‘One day while I stood over the railings of my veranda watching him sleep, he opened his eyes all of a sudden and looked at me. They were eyes reddened with sleep and desire. I felt uneasy while they gazed my limbs and withdrew to my room in a hurry’. (My Story, P.99)

The same ‘don’ one dawn was arrested by the police for the crime of boot-legging.

How miserable and wretched was her life because of an insensitive rather selfish husband who hated ‘those midnight scenes’ of the son knocking whimperingly and the husband shouting at her, her son and the maidservant trying to comfort the pestering son.

She writes, ‘I felt miserable. I had lost whatever emotional contact I once had with my husband... who had no time for his family’. (My Story, P. 102)

What aggravated the pain was her friends, the neighbouring ladies ‘basked in the warmth of a successful marriage’. (My Story, P. 102)

Though she didn’t admit to them that her marriage was a ‘flop show’. She couldn’t think of a divorce because of the shackles of the society where ‘A broken marriage was as distasteful, as horrifying as an attack of leprosy’. (My Story, P. 102)

When her husband turned to his bosom friend for comfort, ‘They
behaved like lovers in my presence’. She became very suspicious, wondering what two men could possibly do together to get some physical pleasure’. (My Story, P.104) Here is an innuendo at homosexuality.

She grew so frustrated that she says, ‘...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)

How sublimated sex becomes through this highly original imagination of Kamala Das. Calling private part ‘a wound’ that too ‘soul’s wound’ is an ingenious image. The scenario was so bloody that she says, ‘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)

This ambience resulted in a poem which she sent to the Journal of the Indian P.E.N.

She felt ‘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.105) Kamala Das is the queen of imagery.

The title of this Chapter No. 25 itself speaks volumes: ‘The blood-stained moonlight’. Kamala Das invents a story under hallucination or is it real, remains an enigma.

Such episodes make the veracity of her account doubtful: ‘The ayah, one night, led a drunkard to her bedroom and left Kamala and the man alone in the room and closed the door. ‘This was to be a rape-scene... Soon enough, after an incomplete rape, he rolled off my body and lay inert at the foot of the bed... His mouth on my skin was hot. 'I shall forgive you, I whispered, but go away, go away...' Then he fell asleep’. (My Story,
One wonders whether it is a real incident or only a figment of Kamala’s fertile imagination. Her statement, though in a different context, is applicable to this hallucinatory episode as well:

‘There was an imaginary life running parallel to our real life’. (My Story, P.108)

During her second pregnancy she takes to drinking brandy ‘that soothed my nerves’. (My Story, P.108)

How picturesque are her descriptions even about her labour pains:
‘There was a moving pain within me, like a whale turning on its belly all of a sudden in the sea. ‘In half an hour the child was born.’ (My Story, P.109)

At times Kamala Das waxes philosophic like an ancient sage. Mark this statement: ‘One’s real world is not what is outside him. It is the immeasurable world inside him that is real. Only the one who has decided to travel inwards, will realize that his route has no end’. But at twenty, I was ignorant of these facts. (My Story, P. 109)

A woman’s, especially that of an artist’s, mind is unfathomable. When a psychiatrist was consulted he examined a picture painted by her before her. The picture ‘showed demons mating with snakes’. He advised, ‘She needs rest,... and lots and lots of sleep’. (My Story, P.110)

For Kamala Das, her nervous breakdown was ‘a blessing in disguise’. As she says ‘...there developed between myself and my husband an intimacy that was purely physical’. (My Story, P.111)

She weaves beautiful imagery about her mental condition:
‘...like the mist floating over hill-stations in the mornings there was a murkiness veiling my consciousness. My senses were like lotuses that
folded themselves into tight buds as sunset hours. The contours of my world had gradually blurred’. (My Story, P.111)

Kamala’s assertion ‘I was by nature shy’, strikes a contradiction when she herself confesses of making love in an extramarital way. Specially with her ‘handsome friend’ who remains a mystery: ‘Once or twice standing near him with his arms around my shoulders I whispered, I am yours, do with me as you will, make love to me... but he said, no, in my eyes you are a goddess, I shall not dishonour your body...’ (My Story, P. 115)

What sort of love was this? Platonic -- perhaps. Accidentally, a love letter the self-same fellow wrote to Kamala from Delhi, fell into the hands of her husband! He reacted sharply: ‘What on earth could have made you encourage such a stupid fellow?’ (My Story, P.118)

The reason for love was ‘grey eyes where on afternoons I had seen the sun fall like honey or of his pretty smile or of his dimpled cheeks’. (My Story, P.118)

The friend in question, when learnt about the incident disappeared fast – like a ‘coward’ as Das puts it. Her feelings at this juncture are epitomised in the title of the Chapter 28: ‘My love was like alms looking for a begging bowl’. (My Story, P.116)

Like a vessel she was overflowing with love as she says ‘The only truth that mattered was that I had all that love to be given away’. (My Story, P.118)

Ranjana Harish in her cirtical essay on Kamala Das’s My Story comments:

‘She describes her mental state of those days in a very untraditional, poetic way thus:

‘Like alms looking for a begging bowl was my love which only sought
for it a receptacle… (My Story, P.118)

Yet another critic Shirley Geok-lin Lim interprets the image of begging bowl as follows: “...it is possible to read the major locus of meaning in Das’s autobiography in the slippage between the two tropes that of alms looking for a begging bowl... and that of devotee worshipping the blue Krishna... For in the shift of tropes Das places a Hindu screen before her feminist project”

Shirley opines about the book, ‘her autobiography reshapes both our consciousness and our unconscious by means of its raw, experimental edges.

The internally persuasive dialogue of her autobiography shares characteristics with the kind of writing described as ‘écriture feminine’ in western literature; Shirley’s analysis of the response of the book due to its frankness and forthrightness is noteworthy.

Shirley comments: ‘The social restrictions on women writers against expressing the kind of sexual and professional autonomy that we find in My Story are as strongly embedded in many Asian cultures today as they were in 1976 when Das’s book appeared’.

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1. (Ranjana Harish, An Attempt to tell Female Body’s Truth in Perspectives on Kamala Das's Prose, ed. Iqbal Kaur, Intellectual Publishing House, New Delhi, 1995 (PP. 49, 50)


Then she cites the names of an array of women critics whose response is negative: ...‘such as Monika Varma, Vimala Rao, and Eunice de Souza’.

Not only to Das’s My Story but to the works of ‘candid Indian women writers such as Gauri Deshpande and Mamata Kalia demonstrate that perceived transgressions of social decorum and traditional behaviour still affect literary evaluation’. ¹

In Shirley’s opinion ‘Das’s critique of patriarchally constructed heterosexuality and her struggle to construct her own terms of sexual empowerment, while sharing similar concerns with Western feminists such as de Beauvoir, Kate, Millett, and Helene Cixous, remains one exceptional Indian woman’s life story. The concluding chapters suggest not so much a retreat as a reconfiguration of her feminist project’. ²

Kamala minutely observed the men who came in her life, who were either lecherous or petty-minded.

‘One of the old ones... had a face that resembles Stan Laurels³ (of Laurel & hardy duo).’. (My Story, P. 156 parentheses mine).

Mark his behaviour with her:

‘This old man used to plant kisses on my cheeks... slobbering kisses that had to be washed out in a hurry... When he once bought me a pornographic book... I decided to end the friendship’. (My Story P. 156)

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¹. Ibid P.107  
². Ibid. P.106  
³. Born Arthur Stanley Jefferson (1890-1965, British born Stan Laurel played the scatterbrained and often tearful innocent. Oliver Hardy (Ollie) his pompous overbearing and frequently exasperated friend. They brought their distinctive slap-stick comedy to many films. The Oxford English Ref. Dictionary (P. 810)
Then there were her father’s friends whom she used to call ‘uncle’ from infancy, who had changed to such an extent that they gave me lecherous hugs from behind doors and leered at me while their wives were away’. (My Story P. 157)

Also there were petty minded old men to whom ‘she used to be infatuated’. (My Story P. 158)

Once she presented to this fellow ‘gilded volumes of Lawrence Hope... but he was so conventional, so cowardly that he went out immediately to buy in return two volumes of Stefan (sic) Zweig to return the favour to be nearly ‘quits’. (My Story, P.158) How petty minded he was! In comparison with such a man, she wonders, “Wasn’t Carlo better bred than the man who did not know how to accept a gift graciously?” But Carlo grumbled, ‘You do not love me at all... I am only a waiting room between trains...’ (My Story, P.158)

She is a keen observer of human nature, especially of the persons who are mentally deranged. In Calicut she found the lunatics galore. Hence she entitles chapter No. 39 as: ‘Calicut gets a good crop of lunatics’. In coruscating prose she gives a pen-portrait of a lunatic or two as follows: ‘Often a mad girl named Narayani came up to the gate and grinned at me, mumbling afterwards of hunger. She had broken teeth that ended in points’.

See portrayal of another mad girl: ‘There was yet another lunatic, an old woman called Ammalu Amma who tried to flatter us into giving her clothes and rice’. (My Story, P. 164)

1. Correct name is Stefan Zweig’. German novelist, who along with his wife committed suicide disgusted with Hitler’s anti-Semitic policies.
How a beggar-woman pestered her has been given as follows: ‘The worst of the beggars was a pale woman in her thirties who came silently carrying a dirty bundle tucked under an arm and who began to rile us in the most pornographic language after finishing her lunch’. (My Story, P. 164)

She is very much impressed by Shirley about whom she writes ‘... I had at that time in Delhi a friend who was probably the most loving of women in the country. Her name was Shirley’. She visited Kamala Das every day in the hospital. She rubbed cold cream on her stiff feet. She sheltered her from looking at the dead bodies brought to the morgue. If she was disturbed in her sleep by the wailing of women she would make up some story or other, telling her ‘Sleep Amy’, ... she would whisper, ‘go back to sleep’. (My Story, P. 169)

When she recovered from her illness she passed through a strange phase. She interrogated to herself ‘... otherwise why did I not get my peace in the arms of my husband? Subconsciously I hoped for the death of my ego...’ I was looking for an executioner whose axe would cleave my head into two’. Seeing her condition her husband passed the remark, ‘You are always dissatisfied’. Only an Italian friend could diagnose her ‘ailment’, her unease as he said, ‘only I can understand you... come away with me...’ (My Story, P. 171) His suggestion is loaded with meaning.

Of the literary figures that came across her life some are very distinguished and remarkable. Nissim Ezekiel, a Jew of Indian origin who was a famous poet. While Kamala Das was admitted to Bombay hospital he too often kept her company as if to nurse her intellectually.

1. A famous poet in Indian English of 'Night of the Scorpion' fame.
Describing his visit Das writes: ‘My friend Nissim Ezekiel visited me, spent the day in my room reading the paperbacks... and sharing the fruit juice with me. Nissim is an ideal companion for any sick person. He is kind and gentle. He does not speak loud enough to harm the nerves of the hearer’. (My Story, P.178)

The heading of Chapter 45 reads: Was my 24-year old marriage on the rocks? One wonders if it is a rhetoric question.

She calls her marriage in a conventional sense a ‘flop’. The perpetual silence between the couple was broken ‘by a word or two about our little son’ (My Story, P.193)

She wails, ‘I had deteriorated much in quality. I could not even feign lust, leave alone feel it. It needed strong tranquillisers to tame my body into an acquiescent posture beneath my virile mate’.

He was so devoted and dutiful to his job and his files that he had neglected her emotionally. (My Story, P.194) When another boss came who was brutal towards him she could hardly control her laughter. The result was that ‘He had aged prematurely. Grey wisps of hair made for his face an untidy frame’. (My Story, P.194)

Despite his devotion and dedication, despite his self-annihilation for the bureaucracy poor husband was humiliated by his boss. Ironically enough he was a six-footer whereas his tormenting and torturing boss ‘was a tiny marionette of a man who had the jerky movements of a tin-soldier’. (My Story, P.195)

In a few lines Das has depicted the picture of a bureaucrat with the minutest detail whereas a lesser mortal of a writer might have taken volumes and volumes to draw the same portrayal.

‘The result was his health broke down’. (My Story, P. 196)
The worst part of it was that, treating him like an alien bird, ‘His colleagues boycotted him. None came forward to sympathise with him when he was ordered to vacate his chair and his room in three hours’ time’. And mark this caustic comment: ‘People like us who believe in the essential dignity of human beings are always left isolated’. (My Story, P.196)

Commenting her son’s joining Dr. K.N. Raj she believes in the adage ‘birds of the same feather flock together’.

Inspired by a literary parallel to this context she makes a sort of Bloomsbury Group:¹ ‘For sheer survival, Duncan Grant, Roger Fry, Clive Bell, Lytton Strachey, Turner and a few others of intellectual eminence, huddled together in the famous ‘Bloomsbury Group’, wary of infiltrators, for they knew that outside its barriers, they were doomed to feel excluded and lonely’. (My Story, P.196)

Strachey was in love with Virginia Woolf but ignoring him she married Leonard Woolf.

Das’s return to Nalapat, her ancestral home, was like Hardy’s Return of the Native’. She describes, ‘My servants were happy with me. I reclaimed the land and began to cultivate it.... ‘The mistress of the Nalapat house is back’, they cried in sheer happiness’. (My Story P. 197)

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¹. Bloomsbury Group: The name given to members or friends who began to meet about 1906 and included among many others John Maynard Keynes, Lytton Strachey, Virginia and Leonard Woolf, Vanessa and Clive Bell, David Garnett, Duncan Grant, E.M. Forster and Roger Fry. The association that was based on friendship and interest in the arts derived its philosophy from the central passage of G.E. Moore’s Principia Ethica: By far the most valuable things are... the pleasure of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects, it is they... that form the rational ultimate and of social progress’. (Sir Paul Harvey, The Oxford Companion to English Literature, Oxford, 1967, P. 97)

Bloomsbury is a district in Holborn, Central London. In the late 19th Century it became the man intellectual and cultural centre of London and in the 20th century between the world wars it was the centre for a number of writers and other intellectuals known as the Bloomsbury Group. (Longman’s English Larousse)
She was here with a determination, ‘I had taken a sentimental journey to my childhood-home. I did not want to return to the impersonal city and its tension.’ (My Story P. 198)

Calling Bombay an impersonal city is highly inventive and ingenious of Kamala Das. In such a big city one is like a drop in the ocean whose entity and identity are vanished, rather swallowed. But that is not the case with a small town or a village which is not ‘impersonal’. ‘It was an idyllic existence’ in the words of Kamala Das’. (My Story, P.198)

In agreement with Kamala, her husband said (while he was on leave), ‘Bombay was a mistake’. (My Story, P. 198)

She was guilty conscious when she confessed, ‘By abandoning it (Nalpat) to the care of vulgar caretakers and managers I had hurt the spirit of the house. I had, unwittingly spilt the blood of its spirit’… (My Story, P. 198)

While convalescing at Nalapat the memories of the dead haunted her. (My Story, P. 208) When the evening came, ‘snake-like I shed their (dreams’) silver coils and woke to meet an alien world…’ (My Story, P.209)

Though her body was inert her mind was agile and alert like a greyhound, “It had said good-bye to its sleep.”

Her “desires were lotuses in a pond, closing their petals at dusk and opening out at dawn once upon a time, they were now totally dead and for them there was no more to be a re-sprouting’. (My Story, P.209)

She values the readers too dear ‘it is for them that I continue to write’. (My Story, P.209) It redounds upon her self-confidence!

Durrani – Personal Conflict

Tehmina Durrani’s autobiography My Feudal Lord is an incredible book. It is a three-pronged attack on the society in the country of her birth
viz. Pakistan. Her personal life is intermeshed with a feudal lord who is also a politically powerful figure – her husband. And the chequered political history of Pakistan which is ruled alternately by the military and the civilians.

Her personal life is beset with the scars of an incestuous husband who against the tenets of Islam and all civilized societies has clandestine sexual relations (often coming to the surface) with Adila, the sister of his wife Tehmina Durrani under their own roof. Tehmina was compelled by her queer husband to live in a ménage a trois – husband, wife and love – situation.

Twice she seeks divorce and twice she is forced to return to the same evil-person who is a congenital womanizer, who had no qualms or scruples to kidnap her own children.

Durrani’s maternal and paternal families were poles apart. As she asserts, ‘my mother’s family was well-educated and actively involved in the politics of the princely states... My grandfather was Nawab Sir Liaquat Hayat Khan. His younger brother, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan was the governor of the Punjab before partition. My mother grew up in a home where the British life was slavishly aped...’ (My Feudal Lord, P.164)

This disparity and dissimilarity in the social statuses of mother and father led to her father being dominated by her mother, reducing him to a henpecked husband.

Her mother was married to the eldest son of Nawab of Tank who was with an Oxbridge background. Despite steeped in Western education ‘The royal family of Tank was extremely conservative’. (My Feudal Lord, P.164)

Female foeticide was common in the Nawab’s family -- even in those
backward times in the 50’s which is so common today. So in the grip of fear when she became pregnant, “She came to Lahore for her confinement, determined never to go back into that savage household. She was right. When Rubina my sister, was born, black flags were hoisted all over Tank.”

So her mother ‘broke her marriage and stayed on in Lahore’. (My Feudal Lord, P.165)

Her mother’s second husband that is Tehmina’s father was the son of “an activist of Red Shirt party of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan” popularly known as ‘Frontier Gandhi’.

He met Tehmina’s mother in a restaurant in Lahore; sought her hand in marriage. But the social barrier was, ‘Pathan boys did not marry Punjabis’. (My Feudal Lord, P.165) His family opposed it. Their raison d’etre apart from Pathan v/s Punjabi was, “The girl their son had chosen was not only a Punjabi, she was a divorcee and the mother of a little girl’. (My Feudal Lord, P.165) But love prevailed and her father married her mother in 1952. As her mother had married a man beneath her status she took him in her fist. When Tehmina says, ‘My mother had taken charge of his life’ she waxes eloquent about the domineering nature of her mother who controlled her husband on one hand and all her children – Tehmina’s siblings – on the other.

Tehmina was born to this couple in 1953. When she grew she attended upon her mother. She ironed her mother’s clothes very smoothly with great pains. Hence she says ‘The only creases that remained were on my forehead’. Her narrative is replete with such beautiful but meaningful expressions, full of images.

At the age of 13 she fell ill with meningitis. This illness could have
been proved fatal but the danger was averted. At that juncture her sister Adila was born. Who, when grew adult, like a growth of cancer proved herself a constant nuisance to the conjugal life of Tehmina in collusion with her husband Mustafa Khar, who on and off made her, i.e. his sister-in-law subject to his carnal lust, by committing incest under the very nose and roof of Tehmina. Thus marring her family life leading twice to divorce and at last her home was finally broken. The book Feudal Lord to a one-third length is devoted to Adila affair. Rather the familial part of the book is interspersed with Adila episodes. Her shadow has lengthened over the personal and household life of poor Tehmina. We will come across it in this chapter on and off.

Feudal Lord either deals with Adila or the throes of political trauma through which Pakistan was passing during the Bhutto and Ziaul Haq era.

Tehmina’s mother treated her husband in such a nasty manner that she kept her children aloof from their father. Especially Tehmina was kept away from him because ‘She resented his relationship with me. Maybe he would turn to me with his problem...’ (My Feudal Lord, P.178)

Tehmina was sorry for her father for ‘Taking the constant nagging forever.

So much so that ‘on one occasion, I gathered the courage and barged into their bedroom. I was ready to take on my mother’s wrath. I wanted to protect and support him’ because she had heard ‘her aggressive and, ‘he apologetic’.’ (My Feudal Lord, P.178)

Her mother was ‘furious’ at ‘her intrusion’ Tehmina says ‘father asked me to leave and not to interfere’. But this situation of her mother’s dominance did not last long. In the company of the generals he began to assert himself. The result was, in the words of Tehmina, ‘She began to get
flustered and irritable... and took her anger out on us instead’. (My Feudal Lord, P.179)

Due to fear and fury of his wife her father drank alcohol in a bottle of Pepsi. He was pitifully henpecked, in the eyes of Tehmina Durrani.

At a marriage party in Lahore Tehmina met Anees and Anees fell in love with her. His mother had already proposed for Tehmina. But her mother turned down the proposal on the pretext that she was too young. But actually she counted Anees below her status. But when Tehmina told her mother that ‘I would marry no one but Anees’, she suddenly budged and agreed to marry her off to Anees. But not without first breaking off the engagement. “Finally she climbed down from her high-horse and cleared the way for my marriage.” (My Feudal Lord, P. 185)

Pakistan was passing though the trauma of break away of its eastern wing brugeoning into a new nation of Bangladesh. Her father was sent to jail to taste the ire of Mr. Bhutto. When he was released Tehmina and Anees were married in a simple ceremony. Strangely enough, as she confesses. ‘I was an unhappy bride’ because she didn’t love Anees. (My Feudal Lord, P.186) But the marriage opened new avenues as she says ‘Anees was my door to freedom. I was destined to walk through him in order to find what I was looking for’. (My Feudal Lord, P.187)

She meets Mustafa Khar, the man who later broke her home, at the Punjab Club. In one sentence she had defined his character laconically: ‘He was like a cobra about to strike’. (My Feudal Lord, P.189)

It was the time when he had ‘resigned and had taken on his erstwhile mentor, Mr. Bhutto. Mustafa Khar was the ‘Sher-e-Punjab’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 189)

Her comment also depicts a true picture of Mr. Bhutto 'Mr. Bhutto
preferred lions in cages’. (My Feudal Lord, P.189) The hint is that he liked yes men, the people under his thumb.

Here Tehmina was introduced to Sherry (Shahrazad), wife of Mustafa and she introduced her to Mustafa. It was only a formal introduction.

That party was ominous as Tehmina reveals: ‘Mustafa Khar had entered our lives’. (My Feudal Lord, P.191) And he had entered to wrack and break – break the home of Anees by snatching his wife Tehmina to satisfy his carnal lust and then alluring an underaged girl Adila – Tehmina’s younger sister. Incest was no taboo for Mustafa. Anees and Tehmina were warned that Mustafa was ‘a great Don Juan’. They said, ‘He is a womaniser. A compulsive Casanova’. ... Anees was unmoved by the warnings’. (My Feudal Lord, P.192)

To him his heedlessness cost his wife Tehmina. As the old man of the sea was a curse that mounted Sindbad in the Arabian Nights so was Mustafa for Tehmina.

His first wife Wazir whom he had abandoned was his cousin. At Murree ‘he came into contact with women who purveyed their charms for a price’. (My Feudal Lord, P.195)

He fell in love with a college girl in Lahore and while eloping with her, was ‘caught on the road to Multan’. Her father insisted that he should first get married. The fates stonewalled the marriage.

His another love was Safia, an air-hostess. But after marriage poor girl was stifled for he sent her to his native Kot Addu (My Feudal Lord, P. 198)

Then he married Naubahar a prostitute. When Bhutto came to power ‘Mustafa Khar became governor of the Punjab’. It was a ‘red letter
day. The red-light district was jubilant’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 199) The juxtaposition is ironic.

But Bhutto warned him to chuck out the prostitute for ‘the governor of the Punjab could not have a common dancer as his wife’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 199) So Mustafa flatly told her ‘Their marriage was over’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 199)

She begged, and wept and finally cursed him: ‘You shall never be at peace. A woman will destroy you like you have destroyed me’. Her curse was answered and Tehmina destroyed Mustafa as he destroyed Naubahar.

How the feudal lords treat an infidel wife is a horrendous description: ‘His wife Safia had illicit relations with Mustafa’s younger brother Murtaza. So Mustafa punished her by inserting ‘red chillie (sic)\(^1\) powder into her’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 200)

It appears incest was common in the feudal society. Mustafa himself had brazen sexual relations with Adila, Tehmina’s real sister and Mustafa’s sister-in-law.

The phrase bump off is a euphemism for ‘killing’ or eliminating a persona non grata in the book. When Mr Bhutto, in the context of poor Safia’s final solution, suggests to Mustafa, ‘I say, why don’t you bump her off’. While recounting the Safia episode Mustafa tells Tehmina. ‘No, in Islam if you kill your wife in a fit of passion, when you discover her with another man, it is not a crime’. (My Feudal Lord, P.201)

Then came Shahrazad (Sherry) in Mustafa’s life who was a cultured woman hence an ideal wife. She was niece of Mrs. Pirzada who was Mr. Bhutto’s education minister. He married Sherry, who became a dull ‘yes

\(^1\) correct spelling is ‘chilli’ without ‘e’
woman’ for him. As Tehmina couches it: ‘She was too dull for him. No challenge’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 202)

Tehmina has also accurately judged Mustafa’s character: ‘I understood his inability to make a stable marriage’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 200)

What Sherry revealed to Tehmina about Mustafa proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that he was a slave driver and his wives were no better than slaves – the galley slaves, at that, the slaves of drudgery. Poor Sherry was not allowed to meet even her parents. Though wife of the Governor of Punjab, ‘She was now a prisoner’ in the Governor House. (My Feudal Lord, P. 204)

He was a shikari – a hunter and his favourite shikar i.e. prey was a woman, his own wife, who had to plight her troth with him’ – pun is intended! Tehmina makes intelligent witty comments, for example she says ‘Mustafa’s house was not a home’ or this paradoxical expression: ‘In the process of discovering this man I had suddenly found myself’. (My Feudal Lord, PP. 207, 8)

During a dance he found his first salvo: ‘Will you marry me’ (My Feudal Lord, P. 208)

Then he convinced her your ‘marriage to Anees was over and that my future lay with him (Mustafa)’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 209)

He played cheap tricks to engage Tehmina in sex. One day called Anees for swimming at the Governor House. While poor, simpleton Anees enjoyed swimming Mustafa was making him a cuckold.

On the other hand he was hoodwinking Sherry that she was not wanted at a ‘stag party’ i.e. all male party whereas he was enjoying Tehmina’s company. Then Sherry came to Tehmina with a warning: ‘Get
out of my life. Get out of his life. He is a very difficult man... He’ll ruin your life’. In the long run her warning proved prophetic.

The women were taunting Tehmina with their acid tongues. “The punishment of stoning an adultress to death was carried out with their looks and their acid tongues.” (My Feudal Lord, P.213)

The whispering campaign against Tehmina among the circle of ladies intensified, as she says, ‘The sniggers and the nudges and the obvious whispers were very noticeable Guilt makes you more sensitive’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 214)

Unlike Mustafa Anees was a gentleman who graciously granted divorce to Tehmina. The only favour he begged of her was the custody of their daughter Tania. To which Tehmina generously agreed. (My Feudal Lord, P. 219)

Thus at 22 Tehmina was a divorcee. This decision to marry Mustafa was dubbed by her parents as a fit of madness. Hence she was taken for consultancy to the psychiatrist Dr. Haroon. ‘He pronounced his verdict: Mustafa Khar is a professional seducer. Your daughter is a victim’. (My Feudal Lord, P.219)

While Tehmina was at Peshawar, Anees’s family met with his divorced wife. Anees’s family blamed him ‘for exposing me to a ‘bad man’.

Mustafa was lured by yet another woman as Tehmina writes: ‘I had also heard that Mustafa had developed a relationship with a singer’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 221)

Tehmina was no more a maverick. ‘Mustafa Khar had branded me. I carried his stamp. (My Feudal Lord, P. 221) At that time Mustafa suddenly fell from Mr. Bhutto’s grace. While in hiding from the CID, ‘He asked me to marry him’. (My Feudal Lord, P.222) At last at Kot Addu, Mustafa’s
village she married Mustafa ‘on the 25th of July 1976’. Her justification for this step was: ‘I wanted the storm that had enveloped my life to break... I did not realize that the storm would rage for the next 15 years of my life’. (My Feudal Lord, P.222)

In one sentence she compacts Mustafa’s character when she says ‘Mustafa was too impulsive to allow my life to settle into a routine’. (My Feudal Lord, P.223)

Bigamy didn’t disturb Sherry, the first wife of Mustafa, for she had taken it for granted. She was at the mercy of a tyrant who often abused her as Tehmina puts it “using filthy language. I had never heard such expletives.” (My Feudal Lord, P.225)

But Tehmina’s sympathies were with Sherry who was pregnant.

‘She had taken my presence as lying down’. Often the triangle went together, which was very awkward to Tehmina who says ‘I would recoil’. But ‘Sherry did not mind it’. (My Feudal Lord, P.222) In the words of Gahlib "Mushkilen itni padeen mujh par ke aasan ho gayeen.” (So many troubles were heaped on me that they became easy for me) (My translation).

Mustafa was a real tyrant who broke sticks on the back of his own son. For he believed in the adage ‘spare the rod and spoil the child.’

Tehmina felt that she was reduced to a serf. Sherry gave birth to a son. Alas he caught pneumonia and died. ‘Baby’s death was the last straw’. Mustafa divorced poor woman. Thus Tehmina remained his only wife.

As the rumour spread that it was Mustafa who killed his baby son, Anees flatly refused to send Tania to Tehmina, justifying ‘that his daughter would not be allowed to live with an evil man like Mustafa Khar’.
He derived masochistic pleasure by eliciting details of Tehmina’s marriage to Anees. And then beat her blue and black, literally. He reduced her to ‘A mangled shadow of myself’. (My Feudal Lord, P.222) Mustafa had crossed all limits of savagery.

Another instance of Mustafa’s unpredicted behaviour, as Tehmina quotes is: “He fell on my feet and began to weep and sob. He begged forgiveness’. In utter confusion she ‘looked down upon this man who had changed from master to slave’. (My Feudal Lord, P.230)

Tehmina says he was unpredictable... ‘My love for the man had turned into fear’. (My Feudal Lord, P.231)

She is absolutely right when she comments ‘the psychological damage was worse’. (My Feudal Lord, P.231)

He beat her everyday for one reason or the other, for the slightest provocation and even for no provocation at all.

Mustafa was a Jack of all trade and master of none. For Tehmina’s newborn daughter he invented a contraption to keep her head flat. Poor girl felt very uncomfortable for ‘the head trap was far too tight. But Mustafa insisted on it – ‘playing Dr. Spock’\(^1\) (My Feudal Lord, P.240)

He was so cruel that because, ‘He would be disturbed by her (daughter’s) bawling and would want to shut her up by force’. (My Feudal Lord, P.240) On a number of occasions he would stifle her yells with his hand or with a cloth.. The man could very easily suffocate my child....’ (My Feudal Lord, P.240)

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1. Dr. Spock: Benjamin McLane (Known as Dr. Spock) born 1903. American paediatrician and writer. His manual The Common Sense Book of Baby and Childcare (1946) challenged traditional ideas of discipline and rigid routine in child rearing in favour of a psychological approach and influenced a generation of parents after the Second World War. He was sent to prison in 1968 for helping draft dodgers. (Judy Pearsall and Bill, The Oxford English Reference Dictionary, Oxford New York, OUP, 1995) P. 1398
‘Sherry’s stories became real. I became like Sherry, his whipping boy’. (My Feudal Lord, P.231)

Describing his nature she comments’. ‘He was cruel. I felt like a bird that had been caged. But the cage was not a safe haven’. (My Feudal Lord, P.231)

She could not escape from Mustafa. She was terrified that ‘Mustafa would get me’ (My Feudal Lord, P.232) His fear had permeated into her conscience for he was fully capable of murder’. So much so that she ‘was frightened of talking in my sleep’. She laments that ‘the transformation of Tehmina Khar from human to vegetable had begun’. (My Feudal Lord P.232)

After child-birth a woman is not in a position to satisfy man’s carnal lust but Mustafa demanded sex even at this delicate and critical juncture. Tehmina puts it in this eloquent way ‘Three days after my baby’s birth, Mustafa’s animal surged’. Mark the striking image! Man becomes brute when sex overwhels him.

Ironically ‘My protestations were a spur to further violence’. (My Feudal Lord, P.241)

Even in the presence of Tehmina’s mother i.e. his mother-in-law Mustafa beat Tehmina. For appearance’ sake she put up a bold face before her mother and the world at large.

On an Eid day in October 1977 Mustafa and Tehmina had to leave Pakistan for London. It was a ‘flight into exile’. (My Feudal Lord, P.244)

During her exile along with Mustafa Khar, Tehmina ‘tried to make up with my estranged parents. My father had not reconciled the idea of my marrying a much married man who was 22 years my senior’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 47)
Tehmina shifted into her parents’ house in Beach Hill. Here in her parents’ house, Tehmina says, ‘my family was taken over by Mustafa’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 50) He tortured her so brutally that ‘My nerves were frayed’. Yet she says ‘I tried my utmost to humour him’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 53) Poor Tehmina could not ‘talk to anybody about her secret torment’. Mustafa expressly forbade it. I could trust no one’. (My Feudal Lord, P.53)

Sometimes he puzzled her by paying such glowing tributes to her: ‘Do you know how much you mean to me. I am incomplete without you’. (My Feudal Lord, P.53)

Mustafa was an enigma. Hence Tehmina ‘learnt to forgive him his temper and... subconsciously submitted to the role of the whipping boy’. (My Feudal Lord, P.53)

The relationship between Tehmina’s parents had a psychological impact on Tehmina. Her mother dominated her father. Poor fellow was short of a henpecked husband. Tehmina had sympathy with her father – though a Pathan he was like a lamb before her mother. It pained Tehmina to no end. She laments: “We could not see this powerful Pathan taking the constant nagging forever. Some nights I would hear them arguing behind closed doors. She would always sound aggressive’. (My Feudal Lord, P.178)

When it went beyond her endurance, ‘On one occasion, I gathered the courage and barged into their bedroom. I was ready to take on my mother’s wrath. I wanted to protect and support him. My mother glared at me. She was furious at my intrusion. My father asked me to leave and not to interfere. (My Feudal Lord, P.178)

The things had come to such a pass that in Tehmina’s words, ‘She (her mother) led his life for him’. She did not allow him to ‘spend time
alone with his brothers or sisters. They were kept well away from him.

Why did she behave like this? Tehmina’s rationale is ‘For some reason, she thought they (father’s brothers) were not a good influence on him’. (My Feudal Lord P.178)

However slowly but surely...’her control and power over him seemed to be waning. He began to stand up against her arguments. He became more forceful with his own beliefs’. (My Feudal Lord, P.179) The result was ‘she began to get flustered and irritable... She hated his little independence...’ (My Feudal Lord, P.179)

The things came to a head ‘when he came out of prison, she was again nagging him. He seemed to have embarrassed him. It wasn’t his fault if Mr. Bhutto had a personality clash with him’. (My Feudal Lord, P.180)

The Adila Factor:

True to its title ‘Contours of Hell’ (Chapter 3) shows how Mustafa made Tehmina’s life a hell -- rather worse than a hell. Mustafa was making open passes at Tehmina’s own sister Adila, giving a damn that it was incest. In Islamic society even legitimate sex with one’s wife’s sister is prohibited, let alone the illegitimate one. But Mustafa was bold enough to have sex with Adila and even bolder to create a situation of ménage-a-trois – three under the same roof: Husband, wife and husband’s girl friend. It was a weird situation for his girl-friend Adila was real sister of Mustafa’s wife Tehmina – the author of My Feudal Lord. It was also a case of open incest in the eyes of the society. But Mustafa was behaving like an ostrich who buries his head in sand while the storm brews and rages around him.

It was constant torture for poor Tehmina for his sexual escapades were not only with her own sister but under her very roof.
It all happened when Mustafa and Tehmina were living in London in exile.

Adila first meets Mustafa at Marbella in Spain when Mustafa and Tehmina flew from London to meet Tehmina’s parents. Adila was with her parents. What was her impression of Mustafa, Tehmina recounts the first encounter between the shrewd Mustafa and impressionable poor Adila. ‘There was curiosity on her part about this powerful man who was now his brother-in-law’ (My Feudal Lord, P. 48)

From the very beginning Tehmina marked: “There was something very strange about Adila and Mustafa. There was a sense of presentiment in the air. I could feel two minds consummating. The older mind had found its child victim, and was pleased to know that the object of its desire was responding. Here was the woman he had searched for, across so many soiled sheets, so many devastated bodies.” (My Feudal Lord, P.48)

Adila’s was an impressionable and very raw-mind for ‘She was only 13 at that time’ as Tehmina puts it. (My Feudal Lord, P.48)

As if they were made for each other. ‘She was a child seductress. A reflection of himself. A complete foil for him. (My Feudal Lord, P.49)

Mustafa played off mother against Tehmina. ‘Methodically, he began widening the chasm between mother and daughter... He wanted me to remain trapped on his island under his tyrannical rule’. (My Feudal Lord, P.51)

Adila was spoilt.. Mustafa and she got along. Then by his backing Adila became bold enough: “Adila was now on a different tack. She was driving a wedge between Mustafa and myself.” (My Feudal Lord, P.56) Mustafa now began to defend and take sides with Adila. Mustafa always found an excuse to go to Tehmina’s parents only for the sake of Adila.
Tehmina comments ‘The triangle had a common base’.

Unfortunately for Tehmina her family had pitted against her in league with Mustafa. Becoming desperate and hopeless, at Jam Sadiq’s place she took poison from his medicine cabinet. She was rushed to Royal Free Hospital. Tehmina describes: ‘The night went by. I struggled to shuffle off my mortal coil’.1 (My Feudal Lord, P.58)

However she survived the administration of poison by itself. But there was another scourge in store for her. Mustafa was raring to punish her for being examined by ‘the male doctors’. You have humiliated me... You will pay for this... You just wait and see’ (My Feudal Lord, P. 59)

While she spent a night at her mother’s place someone came into the room and Mustafa went along with her. Mustafa concocted the story, ‘Oh, it was Adila’. Her problem, Mustafa said: “She is involved with an Iranian boy and is having problems.” (My Feudal Lord, P. 59) Tehmina says Mustafa was now officiously ‘playing the role of the saviour of the family’s honour’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 60)

Mustafa asserted ‘A woman was like a man’s land. ‘The Koran2 says so’, he said. I interpreted that verse differently’, Tehmina said. (P. 60)


2. Koran also Quran – the holy book of Islam, composed of the revelations (said to have come from the archangel Gabriel) to the Prophet Muhammad. The Koran was written in Arabic during the Prophet’s lifetime, from c.610 to his death in 632. The revelations are grouped into 114 units of varying lengths, known as suras; the first sura is said as part of the ritual prayer. The revelations touch upon all aspects of human existence, from the doctrinally focused revelations of Muhammad’s early career in Mecca to those concerning social organization and legislation. Considered to be the direct and inimitable word of God, the Koran is held by Muslims to be untranslatable, although versions or interpretations in many other languages are available. (The Oxford English Reference Dictionary, Judy Pearsall and Bill Trumble, Oxford New York, 1995, p. 791)
Adila was a thorn in her flesh. Tehmina grumbles: ‘My own relationship with my little sister was strained’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 63) Mustafa was brazenly seducing Adila now. One day her sister Minoo revealed, ‘She had seen Mustafa picking up Adila from school and driving off. She did not know where they went but their rendezvous\(^1\) lasted for three hours’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 62)

When Mustafa came Tehmina confronted him. ‘He looked me straight in the eye and denied the whole story’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 63)

Next day ‘she received a frantic call from her mother, ‘Adila had run away from home’.

Mustafa was requested to help find Adila.

At long last Adila rang up whining, ‘I’m never going back to that house. They all hate me. They have accused me of having designs on Mustafa’. Adila was found but was not ready to return home. ‘I’m in love with an Iranian boy. I am going to stay with him. You can’t stop me’.

At that time ‘Mustafa and Adila were left alone in my own house to talk’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 67) Tehmina says, ‘My mother arrived looking very angry...

She accused him of destroying her under-aged\(^2\) daughter. “You are cunning and evil man ...I warn you not to play with my family’s honour. Ironically enough Tehmina rose to Mustafa’s defence’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 67)

\(^1\) rendezvous is pronounced as: rondi, vu: means, meeting; meeting place

\(^2\) Under age itself is an adjective, no need of writing under-aged. (Collins Concise Dictionary, Harper Collins Publishers, Glasgow, 1996 (P. 1466)
When she asked Mustafa to clear her doubts, ‘Mustafa had a new script written out: “Minoo was right. I did pick Adila up from school that day... Adila had become pregnant. It was that Iranian boy. I had taken to a clinic to have an abortion’. (My Feudal Lord, P.68)

Doesn’t it look like ‘washing your dirty linen in public’? But in an honest, frank and forthright biography it is a fine point, not a blemish. The West prizes it the most.

Just then her daughter Nisha was born. When Mustafa came she blamed him for shattering and breaking her family. Mustafa, the beast of a man, began to trash her leaving her bruised. (My Feudal Lord, P.68)

In the night whenever he was alone with Tehmina, Mustafa would incriminate her for no crime of hers and ‘would make a point with his shoes’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 69)

He was a despot as a husband. ‘Don’t you know that you are my wife. That you have no life apart from that...’ (My Feudal Lord, P.70)

How sad was her fate that ‘Mustafa communicated with me through his fights’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 70)

He didn’t spare even poor Naseeba. Once ‘He caught hold of the wailing babe and submerged her head under the water’. So much so that after this episode ‘Naseeba developed aqua-phobia’ – the fear of water. (My Feudal Lord, P. 71)
He was unpredictable. Tehmina aptly puts it when she remarks, ‘His ‘Jekyl and Hyde’\(^1\) personality could not be trusted’. (My Feudal Lord, P.71)

She felt that she ‘was always under surveillance. He was like Orwell’s Big brother’.\(^2\) Mustafa the sadist ‘enjoyed watching me squirm’. (My Feudal Lord, P.71) Even when he was in America on a long distance call he would abuse her. Even his trips abroad gave poor Tehmina no respite. He watched Tehmina even from long distance for he had an eyewitness to my ‘crime’ – Adila. Adila played the fifth columnist\(^3\) in the household of Tehmina.

Things had come to such a pass that, ‘I began to secretly hope that Mustafa could die’. ‘He had foul tongue at that. Venom rolled off it trippingly. He had a repertoire of the most vile abuses which could make a whore blush’. (My Feudal Lord, P.73)

To make the matters worse Tehmina wails, ‘Just as I was settling down in my private hell, Adila surfaced. My equilibrium of pain was disturbed’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 74)

She heard her over the extension: ‘Do you love me?’ Mustafa answered: ‘More than you’ll ever know’. In yet another call Adila said, ‘I can’t stand being without you anymore’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 74)

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1. Dr. Jekyl a physician conscious of the duality, the mixed good and evil in his own nature, and fascinated by the idea of the advantage that would arise if the these two elements could be clothed in different personalities, discovers a drug by means of which he can create for himself a separate personality that absorbs all his evil instincts. This personality, repulsive in appearance, he assumes from time to time and calls Mr Hyde, and in it he gives rein to his evil impulses ...Hyde commits a horrible murder ... on the point of discovery and arrest he takes his own life. (Paul Harvey, Oxford Companion to English Literature P.428)

2. Big Brother, the totalitarian dictator in George Orwell’s (famous novel ‘Nineteen Eighty-four’ (P. 580) 1949 (Ibid)

3. Fifth Column: a group of people within a country at war who are sympathetic or working for its enemies. The term dates from the Spanish civil war... (Oxford English Ref. Dictionary, N.Y. 1995 P. 517)
Tehmina called a family conference and related the whole Adila episode. ‘Mustafa told me about Adila. How she chases him and harasses him. He is fed up. Adila is trying to wreck my marriage’. Adila called my bluff... Tell him to come here and say it to my face... Let him confront me’. Tehmina says, ‘she knew that Mustafa was in her little hands’. (My Feudal Lord, PP. 74, 75)

When she told Mustafa of the telephonic conversation, ‘he went berserk’. He started to hit her with the butt of a double-barrelled gun’. Then he made her strip to the last stitch. She says ‘I was now stark naked’. ‘This is the greatest of all humiliations’. She was mother naked as her ‘arms were not sufficient to cover me’. It was the height of her embarrassment. ‘I wanted to cover myself. In front of the man who had always placed such a high premium on charm¹ (sic) and haya’. (My Feudal Lord, P.75) He snatched ‘phone from her hand and began to beat her with a renewed vigour ‘He was gloating. He had rubbed Tehmina Durrani’s nose in the filth’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 76)

Many years after, she read about ‘the women of Nawabpur who were paraded naked through ‘their city, by some feudal lords’. (My Feudal Lord, P.76) There was similarity in their plight and that of hers. That memory hurt her.

Mustafa was not acceptable in decent circles. Tehmina wails, ‘His reputation as a womaniser without any scruples always preceded him. I had altered his reputation by defending him’. (My Feudal Lord, P.76)

She received the shock of her life when from Spain her mother scolded her on phone, abusing Mustafa she said, ‘he was sick and should

1. It should be sharm not charm. Compare this with Salman Rushdie’s title of the novel Shame
be sent to an asylum’. Then ‘Adila came on the phone and said: ”I’ve been sleeping with him for three years... Mustafa hates you Tehmina. Mother hates you too...I’d leave him before he leaves you’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 77)

Dai and Bilal were accomplices in arranging the liaison between Adila and Mustafa, Adila blurted out to Tehmina.

When Tehmina wanted to confirm it from Mustafa he said, ‘Tehmina, your sister is a mental case.’ (My Feudal Lord, P.78)

As a diversion she took resort to painting. ’But Mustafa reacted to my new-found confidence by increasing the frequency and intensity of his beatings.’ (My Feudal Lord, P.78)

Now a change had come over Tehmina. She ‘had developed a look which conveyed defiance and disagreement’. Tehmina describes vicissitudes of Mustafa’s nature: ‘After a severe beating, he would grovel. He would weep, fall at my feet...’ (My Feudal Lord, P.79)

The anonymous phone calls which he received, according to Mustafa were from ‘Zeenat Aman for she was madly in love with him and wanted to marry him’. (My Feudal Lord, P.80)

‘She won’t take no for an answer’.

How she was still with Mustafa for ‘since I married Mustafa I have been clinical.’ (My Feudal Lord, P.81)

Then the penny dropped. Zeenat Aman was just a hoax. She was to be replaced by Adila who had informed Tehmina’s ‘mother that she wanted to marry Mustafa’. In turn ‘Mustafa had vowed to marry her’.

‘He was playing for time. ’He said that the Koran also prohibits a relationship with two sisters at the same time’. It would ruin his political future if all this came out’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 83)
Everybody blamed Tehmina including her grandmother for this state of affairs, as she advised her, ‘You must not leave him. He will not spare Adila’. (My Feudal Lord, P.83)

When she turned to Mustafa he began to beg for forgiveness like a mendicant beggar.

When her grandmother confronted Mustafa, he had the temerity to say ‘I’ll go and bring Adila into my house’. ‘He admitted that the relationship began the day I had asked him to drop her to school. They had gone to my father’s flat instead’. (My Feudal Lord, P.84)

Mustafa had ruined one and all of a family as Tehmina puts, ‘we were all victims, shattered and devastated by this one man’. (My Feudal Lord, P.84)

‘Mustafa played chameleon again’

‘Do you really think I would leave you for Adila’ (My Feudal Lord, P.85)

When she firmly asked him to tell Adila to go out of their lives he developed cold feet. So at her insistence he dropped her to her father’s house.

‘He refused to let my daughters go with me. I left them behind’. (My Feudal Lord, P.86)

She was so sad and lachrymose that while reading Koran, ‘Every sacred word on the pages of Koran soaked with my tears’, This was her ablution.

While delivering her baby ‘I wanted to have this child without so much as his (Mustafa's) shadow falling over us’. (My Feudal Lord, P.86)

She always brooded ‘My relationship with my friends and family had come under severe strain because of this man’. (My Feudal Lord, P.88)
After Ali, her youngest child’s birth, she had turned retaliatory. Her throwing a hot utensil at Mustafa is a case in point. He threatened her, ‘If you ever think of leaving me... I shall fling acid on your face. I’ll maim you and take my children from you’. (My Feudal Lord P. 90)

‘That night he beat me viciously. I beat him back’ this was her newfound defence.

She threatened him that by ‘lifting the veil on his sadistic acts through papers which would be undoing of a politician. (My Feudal Lord P. 93)

As she began to retaliate Mustafa became flustered. At the occasion of Dilip Kumar\textsuperscript{1} and Saira Bano's visit when he threw a jug at Tehmina, to teach him a lesson, she locked him in the bathroom. Poor fellow kept banging the door but she didn’t relent and went to receive the honoured guests downstairs. ‘They asked me where Mustafa was. I made an excuse. I could hardly tell them that the lion of the Punjab was locked up in the bathroom’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 99) Mark Tehmina’s sense of humour.

The book is fraught with such petty quarrels between Tehmina and Mustafa. She proudly says, ‘The lion was being baited (sic)\textsuperscript{2} in his own den’. (My Feudal Lord P. 99)

Meaningfully she writes, ‘The cat and Mouse game continued except that the relationship was more akin to Tom and Jerry.\textsuperscript{3}

Then came a sea change – a transformation, in Tehmina as she puts it, ‘I had become his political shadow’. (My Feudal Lord P. 100)

\begin{itemize}
\item[1.] Dilip Kumar (Yusuf Khan) the thespian is the most popular matinee idol of Indian film industry called Bollywood on the analogy of Hollywood. Saira Bano is his wife.
\item[2.] It should be couched as ‘he was bearded in his own den’, instead of baited
\item[3.] A popular TV cartoon strip.
\end{itemize}
Now if hit, she would cry from the rooftop that ‘Mustafa hit me’. He became apologetic ‘and gave all sorts of reasons for his action’ but ‘It did not wash’. (My Feudal Lord P. 101)

Suddenly there was a change of heart – Adila beseeched Tehmina to forgive her and large-hearted Tehmina forgave her for Adila was soon to be married.

Once, while her mother was away in America, and Adila in a boarding school, Adila talking on phone revealed to Tehmina that Mustafa was pestering her to see, just a glimpse. ‘He kept telling me that he would die without me’. (My Feudal Lord P. 103)

Tehmina wailed, ‘Every time I had trusted this man, he had betrayed me. I hated him’.

Mustafa trying to clear his postion said: ‘Don’t believe her. She just makes these things up… She is trying to ruin your marriage. She is not in love with me’. (My Feudal Lord P. 103)

She was determined to leave him for good. But then ‘he swore on Koran that he would never betray me again’. (My Feudal Lord, P.104)

‘Mustafa left for London’ and ‘I walked out with my three children’. She had left Mustafa never to turn back to his threshold. I informed him I had left him for good’. She had determined that henceforward she would never darken his door.

Then she left London for Spain. ‘I waited my past to sink into the deep blue sea I saw around me here in Spain’. (My Feudal Lord, P.105)

What about Mustafa? She writes, ‘He was very desperate to somehow catch the bird that had flown the coop’.

In desperation, ‘He hit the bottle’. (My Feudal Lord, P.106)

Her comment about the people who were advocating Mustafa’s
cause is inimitably fraught with meaning: ‘They saw him repentant. They saw the text without context’.

But once more her heart melted. ‘I came back to England. Mustafa came to pick me up from my mother’s house’. (My Feudal Lord, P.107)

‘Now Mustafa was like a lamb’ and that ‘Mustafa treated me like a queen’. While shopping, ‘he followed me like a henpecked husband’. People in shops looked at him with admiration for being such a model husband without knowing his background, his past tyrannical behaviour with Tehmina

Now ‘the fights had ceased completely’. (My Feudal Lord, P.108)

She shuddered when once more she was pregnant. She had a boding that her pregnancies were cursed. For once more Mustafa, the chameleon changed colour reverting to his original beastly nature. Poor Tehmina was once more back to square one, as ‘He had yoked me again. Unlike Medea¹, I had a heart. (My Feudal Lord, P. 109)

Here Tehmina refers to Medea in contrast to her kind nature against that of Medea who killed her own children fathered by Jason.

‘He stopped me from meeting my friends... He was extracting his pound of flesh from all those who had stood by me’. (My Feudal Lord, P.109)

Tehmina says, ‘Adila re-entered my life’. But this time ‘it was a happy occasion... She was married to Rais Matloob, a landowner from Bahawalpur’. (My Feudal Lord, P.110)

¹ Medea, in Greek Mythology, a magician daughter of Aeetes, King of Colchis. When Jason came to Colchis in quest of the golden fleece, he and Medea fell in love.....Driven from Iolcos, Jason and Medea fled to Corinth, where Jason deserted her for Glaucce, the daughter of the king. Medea avenged herself by killing the two children she had had by Jason and destroying Glaucce. (Oxford Companion to English Literature P.530)
Now and again Mustafa was quarrelling with Tehmina to get back the agreement document that he had signed. Telling a lie he instructed the lawyer ’send the papers. My wife has agreed to revoke the agreement’. He threatened her ‘of bodily harm if I did not revoke the agreement’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 111)

When the postman brought the agreement Tehmina ‘Took the agreement. Picked my children up’ and left Mustafa for good. Her mother tried to persuade her to change her opinion. Tehmina writes: ‘I told my mother that I could never ever believe in Mustafa Khar’s promises again. I had been bitten too often’. I refused to return. My children were made Wards of Court.’ (My Feudal Lord, P.111)

On the eve of elections when Mr. Jatoi’s campaign began, ‘Adila was in Multan and was very keen to come to Kot Addu (Mustafa’s hometown) and witness an election campaign’. (My Feudal Lord, P.332, parentheses mine).

Tehmina didn’t want Adila and Matloob to join them.

But ‘Adila was insistent’.

Adila arrived. As a repeat performance she would sit on the bed chit-chatting with Tehmina while ‘Mustafa would be in the room, doing his yoga. I had a feeling of déjà vu’.¹ (My Feudal Lord, P. 332)

She ‘tried very hard to forget. But the present was slowly becoming the past’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 333)

Mustafa showing understanding said, ‘I think she is trying to make trouble between us. She wants us to fight. Let’s not’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 333)

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¹ *déjà vu*: French expression for ‘the feeling that you have previously experienced something which is happening to you now’. (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (Seventh Edition, OUP 2005, (P. 403))
But once again ‘Adila was up to her tricks’, and Mustafa was aiding and abetting her. For example their visit to polling booths was not without an amorous purpose: ‘he was showing off…’

‘He wanted to put his charisma, his popularity, his power on display for Adila’s benefit’. One can imagine how Tehmina’s heart bled when she saw: ‘Before my very eyes Mustafa and Adila had entered into an alliance. (My Feudal Lord, P.334)

If not their bodies ‘their souls had begun to cohabit again’. Tehmina was rueing the day she had ‘allowed her to come’. She was repentant: But ...then I should not have forgiven her in the first place.’ (My Feudal Lord, P.335)

To please Adila Mustafa used to tease and harass Tehmina. For example in Adila’s hearing he said to Tehmina ‘Tehmina I don’t want to live with you anymore. You have ruined my life...’

But when he returned, ‘he begged and cried and grovelled again. The pendulum swung again’. (My Feudal Lord, P.335)

‘A cold war was on between Mustafa and myself’, (My Feudal Lord, P.337) Tehmina because her house was venue of three persons – Tehmina, Mustafa and Adila. Crossing all barriers Mustafa was openly having an affair with his sister-in-law even under the nose of Adila’s husband -- Matloob. Adila’s wily charms were at work once again. To cause estrangement between husband and wife Adila poisoned Mustafa’s ears by saying that Mustafa ‘should not eat anything you gave me. You would poison me’.

As the saying goes ‘old habits die hard’, Adila was not changed. ‘She was after my husband’. (My Feudal Lord, P.338)

Adila missed no occasion to have a rendezvous with Mustafa. While
their grandmother was breathing her last she left the house with her grandmother’s car and did not come back for she dropped at Liberty Market near a book shop. That was rendezvous between Mustafa and Adila.

Mustafa wanted Adila, his sister-in-law for ‘she had outgrown him. Adila was the perfect instrument’. (My Feudal Lord, P.340)

While dying, her grandmother prayed to God for Tehmina’s protection as she said, ‘Oh Allah, she is my ‘amanat’ with you’. Then she made Mustafa to promise ‘Please be good to her’.

‘He said, ‘Don’t worry. I shall look after Tehmina’. (My Feudal Lord P. 341)

Even holy month of Ramazan could not deter Adila and Mustafa from their illicit relations while Tehmina was sleeping in her bedroom ‘a shadow darted. He woke up and left. He had a smoke-screen to cover his absence – ‘sahri’. ¹ (My Feudal Lord, P.342)

Poor Tehmina was once more back to square one: ‘I was picking up extension, sniffing his shirts for her perfumes, checking them for lipstick smears’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 343)

Her doubts of Mustafa-Adila liaison were confirmed by Adila’s sister-in-law (nanand): ‘He picks her up and drops her off’. (My Feudal Lord, P.343)

How Tehmina taunts Mustafa when after a rendezvous with Adila he had the cheek to stand on ‘Janamaz’ (the praying-carpet) and say prayers. Her taunting was stinging but apt: ‘You are trying to fool God after ... You have done something today that He had expressly forbidden’. (My Feudal Lord, P.343)

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¹ ‘Sahri’ is the pre-dawn breakfast for the faster.
When Tehmina confronted her at her mother’s place she had the cheek to say ‘I am responsible for saving your marriage’. Tehmina inferred that ‘Mustafa was pursuing her. She was not giving in only because of me. He wanted to marry her’. (My Feudal Lord, P.345)

Her life had turned into ‘a painful triangle’ – Mustafa, Tehmina, Adila. Hence the natural corollary was: ‘I had decided to leave Mustafa Khar’.

While he makes love Tehmina addresses to God to punish him for the most heinous kind of adultery – incest. God, in his Koran, has forbidden a man keeping two sisters as wives at one and the same time. Let alone illicit relations even marriage was not allowed. Tehmina invoked ‘God to punish him’ for disobeying his commandment. At last her ‘prayer was answered.

Tehmina says, ‘I remained with Mustafa for two months after that. But he never touched me... I know that God made it happen’. (My Feudal Lord, P.347)

Once more, while Adila met Tehmina at the marriage of their sister Rubina’s daughter she revealed, ‘Mustafa would ring her up... He told her that.. he needed Adila’. (My Feudal Lord P.348) This was just a spark that spurred Tehmina to leave. She recounts her escape vividly, ‘Zarmina came to pick me up and I left Mustafa Khar’s house for the fourth and final time’. (My Feudal Lord, P.348)

She sought refuge in Auntie Samar’s house. But she had to leave it unceremoniously under Mustafa’s pressure on her uncle Asad Hayat who ‘was being manipulated by Mustafa to apply pressure on me’. (My Feudal Lord, P.349)

Mustafa had left her a pauper, penurious and destitute by
withdrawing all her money that was in joint-account in the bank.

Still her will was steeled as she asserts, 'But he could not take away my belief in God. This was one sanctuary that Mustafa could not barricade'. (My Feudal Lord, P.350)

The motherly bond once more compelled her to go to Mustafa’s house to join her daughter Naseeba who was celebrating her birthday bash. But Mustafa trapped her. She says, 'I was being abducted'. (My Feudal Lord, P.351)

She was locked in the bathroom. Fortunately when her father ordered Mustafa, ‘Let her go now’, ‘Immediately Mustafa, after this command let me go’. (My Feudal Lord, P.352)

She became adamant: ‘All I wanted now was a divorce. Nothing short of it’. Her father, ‘asked him to grant me a divorce. Mustafa agreed but with conditions’.

Her mother gave the impression that I did it all to get rid of Mustafa ‘that I was desperate to leave Mustafa, that I had to stoop so low and make up the whole Adila affair’. (My Feudal Lord, P.353)

With tears in his eyes, Mustafa told his children ‘to bear witness, that I don’t want to leave your mother... But she wants to leave me’. (My Feudal Lord, P.353)

But Tehmina was affected in the least, ‘what a great actor you are Mustafa I thought’. (My Feudal Lord, P.354)

‘The press flashed the Adila-Mustafa affair. But her husband Matloob was so much under the thumb of his wife Adila he never believed a word of it. Mustafa stripped Tehmina of all her property, even her car. She got back only her Lahore house that too in exchange of her London house. Her mother just to save Adila’s marriage believed Mustafa whereas her sisters
'refused to be hoodwinked by this political charlatan.’ (My Feudal Lord, P. 355) ‘Jugnoo and Najam (Sethi) who ran the weekly newspaper ‘Friday Times’... made a point to visit me regularly...’ (My Feudal Lord, P.356)

Asma Jehangir, her lawyer, ‘...wondered aloud whether this time it was going to be final’. (My Feudal Lord, P.356)

When Mustafa came with a delegation of his brothers to make Tehmina change her mind ‘I wanted Mustafa to make a confession, in front of his family, I wanted him to speak the truth to them. To reveal the sordid details of his incestuous life. Mustafa could not bring himself to confess’. (My Feudal Lord, P.356) But in a subsequent private meeting he confessed that ‘the devil had got into him and made him do sinful things’ alluding to his relations with Adila’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 356)

He sought her forgiveness and ‘instantly asked me to come back’. But Tehmina was adamant this once. ‘I told Mustafa that I would never return nor would I forgive or forget. No matter what’. (My Feudal Lord, P.357) She was happy for being ‘No longer Mrs Khar. I had been used. I had been discarded and spat out like sugarcane chaff (sic)’. (My Feudal Lord, P.358)

Mustafa’s hubris made him brag and boast to Tehmina in her post-divorce meetings: ‘You have no identity of your own... People meet you because you have something interesting to say about me. (My Feudal Lord, P.358) Mustafa was extremely supercilious and haughty. But Tehmina is happy that she escaped Mustafa to whom she calls ‘a fatal contamination. A few more doses and my spirit would have died. Frorever

1. It is called ‘bagasse’. The dry pulpy residue left after the extraction of juice from sugarcane, usable as fuel or to make paper etc. (Judy Pearsall and Bill Trumble, The Oxford English Reference Dictionary. Oxfor New York 1995. P 102)
... I had snapped out just in time’. (My Feudal Lord, P.360)

By the passage of time, ‘Matloob, Adila’s husband, found concrete evidence of his wife’s dalliance with Mustafa’. (My Feudal Lord, P.362)

Matloob filed a ‘zina’ (adultery) case against Mustafa. Mustafa won the case. Tehmina comments ‘As usual justice tilted in favour of the powerful, the influential’. (My Feudal Lord, P.362)

To offset the effect of court decision Tehmina called a press conference ‘for the first time in 13 years’, I endorsed the veracity of what had been a rumour. I nailed the truth. I said that Matloob was right. Mustafa and Adila were the reason for my divorce... that Mustafa Khar had not only committed incest and thereby violated the injunctions of of The Koran...he was also guilty of statutory rape’. She revealed to the public at large, ‘he had started the relationship with Adila 13 years ago when my sister was still a child’. Her family accused ‘I had gone mad. I was making it all up. Matlooob and I had sold out to Mian Nawaz Sharif’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 363)

But Matloob’s tapes were an incontestable proof against Mustafa to which they said ‘Enough’. (My Feudal Lord, P.363)

Tehmina says, ‘I am often asked why was I so gullible?’

Her answer is, ‘I am not the only person to fall into Mustafa’s trap’. (My Feudal Lord, P.364) There are others who sinned in my company for example ‘Mr Bhutto, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, General Zia, Benazir Bhutto, Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi and Ghulam Ishaque Khan’ – all proved gullible before Mustafa Khar for he had hoodwinked everyone of them.

Mustafa trapped one more girl to marry her, whom Tehmina labels as ‘poor innocent girl’. Tehmina ‘hoped that this would be his last marriage’. Mustafa retorted Tehmina, ‘the girl I am to marry has a greater
capacity to love me than you ever had’. What did the poor girl know of Mustafa? ‘She only knew what he had revealed to her. They only met one month ago’. (My Feudal Lord, P.365)

To expose Mustafa and his ilk she decided to write her autobiography. ‘I sat down. I wrote’. (My Feudal Lord, P. 365) Thus runs the last line of the book. It resulted in the book, My Feudal Lord.