Conclusion

The women’s writing in twentieth century mainly challenges the traditional concepts of feminine roles and attacks the patriarchal structure of society. They write about themselves, their pains, desires, body and mind. These women never hesitate to draw their own body through words, their sexuality and their bodily needs. It took long time for them to realize that they need not be ashamed of being what they are, they need not be apologetic for being women and to express their needs. They make their private issues become public. It is a part of attempt to get their due place in the patriarchal society.

From this point of view Kamala Das is one of those writers who puts the mirror of her life before the society. Shedding all her inhibitions she writes frankly in an outspoken manner. She has chosen the personal, the autobiographical, and the confessional mode to express her inner personality and its journey. Her outward and inner journey is focused through effective and appropriate images, which may be classified as body images, animal imagery, nature imagery and mythological images.

Her confession belongs to her role as a wife, as a mistress to many men and as a mother. She writes boldly about her husband,
lovers, her menstruation, her uterus, sexual desires etc. These subjects are generally avoided by women. But she never hesitates to write about them. She revolts against a conservative society and its taboos which are specially designed for women. A victimized poet, Kamala Das opens the door of her life story to each and everyone to peep in and know her pains, pleasure, struggle and the reasons behind it. Her female self is continuously longing for love which is a rare quality for a man. She has always been treated as a subordinate by every man who comes in her life. It is not the problem of the poetess alone but that of the womanhood in general. According to Anne sexton women for male were considered as,

.... abnormal mysterious, alien creatures, irrational beings hard to understand. ..... whose importance was measured by their relationships to the men who defined their roles in day-to-day life, their lovers, husbands, or fathers. Women were to be tolerated so long they remained within well-defined, uncontroversial, given roles – like that of wife or mother. If any other role they were seen as wicked or evil as bitches or whores. For the men it was simply not convenient to see women as independent entities or even as normal human beings, cohabitants of a shared world.¹
Kamala Das is one of the victims of the patriarchal society that Anne Sexton mentions. She is frustrated in her life as a result of the shock and despair that she received from her married life. She has felt suffocated in her husband’s home as a consequence of her husband’s selfishness, self-centeredness, egoism and his indifferent attitude towards her. For him she is merely a housewife and a partner to warm his bed. He has no soothing words for her, no time to spare with her and fulfil her emotional needs. And as a traditional wife she was expected to follow her domestic duties well, look to his needs and fulfil it as his own wish. She exposes that her innocent body is badly “beaten” (An Introduction) many times in his cruel embrace which she compares with “a finished jigsaw” (In Love). It is nothing but “skin’s lazy hungers” and (The Freaks) “a skin-communicated thing” that exploits her body very rudely. Due to this her anger is expressed in bitter words and symbols. She compares his dark face with a “sun-stained cheek”, his mouth with “a dark cavern” (The Freaks), his limbs spread over her body like “carnivorous plants” (In Love) and his hand sways like a “hooded snake” (The Stone Age) to destroy her femininity. She feels disappointed and calls herself “a yellow cat”
who loses her “sun-shine” and feels herself “a half-dead woman”,
who becomes “no use at all to men”. (The Sunshine Cat).

In ‘The Stone Age’ she portrays her husband as “an old fat
spider” who weaves “webs of bewilderment” around her, erects the
dead, dull stony wall of domesticity that turns her into “a bird of
stone, a granite dove”. She feels herself to be “a sparrow”, “a
brooding dog” and “a homeless cat”. Such a predicament makes her a
self-conscious rebel against the establishment of all sort of bonds of
marriage, family and society from which she wishes to escape:

I shall some day leave, leave the cocoon
You built around me with morning tea,
Love-words flung from doorways and of course.
Your tired lust. I shall some day take
Wings, fly around, as often petals,
Do when free in air…. (I Shall Some Day)

Due to her strong dissatisfaction with her conjugal life, she
becomes rebellious. She has protested against the passivity and the
timidity of the Indian woman and her subordinate position. Kamala
Das never accepts it as her destiny; she stands against it. She has decided to use her body a weapon to crush all the moral codes which are only made for a woman. Enjoyment of sexual freedom is her first step towards revenge and vicarious self-fulfilment.

As a poet of love and sex she never feels ashamed to describe the hungers of her body and its sexual desires. In ‘The Looking Glass’ she offers the readers all the details of womanly secrets and love making. She wishes to offer “the musk of sweat between the breasts” and “the warmth of menstrual blood” to her lover. The keen description of man-woman relationship is frankly narrated which is very rare to find in any other Indo-Anglian English woman poet. There is no element of shame and guilt in her expression of sensual experiences, it is always the celebration of the body and joy. Their sensuous feelings are to be compared with “hot sun” and “fire”. She accompanied many male partners and enjoyed them. But lateron the bitter universal truth comes before her that love is merely physical business for men and no more no less. The woman is the “latest toy” for man to fulfil his desires. Kamala Das goes from door to door to receive love but she was used by each and everyone as “a toy” and left alone. Due to this she becomes frustrated and feels insecure.
She has lost her belief in human relationship. So she makes “sea” her companion to share her pains and problems. “Sea” imagery in her poetry plays a very significant role to focus her psyche. Her past was glorious when she swam in the pond of innocence. Her desire of swimming in adulthood is sensuous that gives her pain. She has mixed experiences. As a result her mind is continuously tossing like “a troubled sea”. Her depressed mind drags her to think of committing suicide.

Her poems like “The Descendants” and “The Suicide” describe the picture of her awareness of feminine self, the defeat, frustration and the feeling of nothingness. Her mind thinks about the sin of adultery and becomes restless and the thought of committing suicide comes in her mind again and again.

She is afraid of the punishment after death for the sin of adultery. She realizes that the way of getting love through physical sex is a mistake that cannot be repaired now. Her awareness of nothingness, physical decay, sin and lack of salvation bothers her and draws her to think of committing suicide. It forces her to look beyond flesh. Her unstable mind thinks of spirituality. She reaches closer to soul, closer to god. She tries to lighten the burden of her soul by
turning towards the mythical figures like Radha and Krishna. She transforms her sexuality into spirituality. She has risen above her carnal desire through the articulation of her faith in love beyond flesh.

This journey shows the graph of her life, her physical as well as psychological journey which starts with lust and ends in eternal love. She has used various images in her poems to express her condition, desires and nature of the men she meets. In the first phase of her poetry her images in general deal with the pain and pleasure of the body. It articulates the sensuous needs of the writer, her unending lust and temporary desire of getting love. These images have limitations as body has. But in the second phase of her poetry the images turn to spiritual love beyond flesh towards an ideal lover Lord Krishna. The journey of her life, her poetry and her imagery turns from pathos to rebellion with the husband, the lover and the people from, lust to love, the victimized physical to the sublimated spiritual, from the body to the soul.