Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION
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The creative process of the world includes the primordial concept of Prakriti and Purusha. At without the balance of the natural attributes between the two will be an unmanageable condition. The interiority of the object defiance is the exteriority of the motif of life. The aspect in the question is in this contemporary world wherein one finds a misbalance between male and female attributes. From time immemorial it has been the efforts of female power to have an association in full confidence with her male counterpart. But it is because of the elemental liniments the balance between the two disintegrates, resulting the protest of the one to the other. The binary of the being comes to destruction and needs to be deconstructed for the interior canalizing of the binaural forces. The one in the discussion stands for female power which has become a pray to her counterpart male power because of his egoistic reflection. The women always remained unnoticed and is in search of her identity by which she can prove binaural motive in society. She inherits and this causes an inner turmoil in the psyche level of male counterpart. With the ideology of man not to associates equally with female power provided her
opportunities to make a protest against the set code of society in which she
has taken for granted against her own interest. This then becomes the
beginning of female consciousness which finally results into self discovery of
a woman or says the beginning of the principle of feminism.

Feminism is not a term to define, not a topic for discussion, nor is it an
ideology to be followed religiously. It is the reaction of female body against
set rule of society which somewhere down the line considers women inferior
than her male counterpart. The system adopted by the society is established
by the male who always had strong wish to be the leader who considers
himself to be born to rule, not to serve. This system imposes the masculine
demand and desires on female and moulds her psyche to desire and pursue
traditionally accepted and confines feminine roles only to produce human
species. Feminism is an effort with a motto to grow awareness among woman
regarding their desires, sexuality, self-definition, existence and destiny by
women. It demands love, respect, compassion and understanding from the
man. This woman’s effort to seek their identity as a woman and interest in
feminine problems started a revolution all over the world. The meaning of
word feminism has so many connotation and has been wrongly interpreted. According to Janet Radcliffe Richards,

*Feminism has a strong fundamental case, is intended to mean only that there are excellent reasons for thinking that women suffer from systematic social injustice because of their sex, the preposition is to be regarded as constituting the essence of feminism.* (1)

Feminism has a broader perspective in the realm of literature especially in English Literature. As it gets involve in the process of Creative Self. Creative Self refers to the objective view points of life. The opposite of creative self is selfish self or physical self which indicates personal view point of life. Personal views might be of any person but they can not be of all people i.e. the problem of one woman can not be the problem of all women so far as physical aspect of all women. The nature of one woman can be similar to another woman, such as- love, affection, motherly qualities, confession etc. When these womanly qualities become the physical self of anybody, they represent lower- lower mimetic zones of human mind. While the same denotes the universal element in thought process they become objective view point of life. They are real attributes of literature and they can also be defined
as universal element/emotional transfer – depersonalization or creative self of any writer. Depersonalization of emotions equals to creative self.

Evenness of Kamala Das and Adrienne Rich meets their poetic self and evenness itself becomes female protagonist in their poetry. According to the theory of Marxism, dialectical materialism lies in the concept of the evolution of the natural world and the emergence of new qualities of being at new stages of evolution.

This dialectic theory reveals itself when Kamala Das and Adrienne Rich show extra concern for the evenness and sexuality. They themselves become female protagonist character and they need to be analyzed to be a particular and finally represent the universal woman—a universal feminine character: a centre of human origin and development but unfortunately marginalized a source of love, affection, and care but deprived of it. Their creative self emerges from the trauma and suffering from their own life. Their poetry displays the tug-of-war between their inner self and the external realities that are compounded in the immediate social and familial situation. Their poetic selves rebel against the imposed cultural and social values on feminine
consciousness by the patriarchal autocratic civilization. Jay Krishnan Nair explains this very clearly in his book:

_The signals that the perceiving mind communicates from the external world to the inner self get rejected recurrently at the psychic level. Similarly when the outer world continually discards the gesture transmitted by the inner self, it becomes a persistent shuttling of incompatible signals to the self and back like sea waves, which eventually sparks off violence within resulting in rebellious poetic outrages. The poet attributes her bitter personal experience to the disorder of the so-called civilized world and its prejudice. The malaise thus created within flows out in the form of poetic confession giving vent to the pent-up suffocative emotions which eventually brings about relief in the poetic self._(2)

Poetry Kamala Das and Adrienne Rich is not the portrayal of outer world but the expression of inner panorama with its vastness and complexity.

Kamala Das and Adrienne Rich both are contemporary poet, belong to same period of time but almost unknown with each other. One belongs to eastern country India and another to western country America. Geographically both the countries are too far from each other with vast socio-cultural difference. With such a vast difference what is common that brought these two poets on
same ground is the plight of woman. Woman who is marginalized, neglected and leading their life according to rules established by males considering women inferior and born to be follower not the leader. Both the poets themselves had undergone the suffering caused by man centered society. They experienced the panic, felt it then looked around and explored number of Kamala Das and Adrienne Rich sacrificing their wish, crushing their self respect for the sake of man’s ego and superiority complex. They decided to be the voice of common women, to explore the real women from the women and to develop them as an individual. From that moment every woman, her feelings, her wishes, her experiences have become the main character in their writing. Whether it is Kamala Das’s Grandmother or Adrienne Rich’s Aunt Jennifer, they represent the women.

Names can be any but the main character of their poetry is woman- as an individual struggling for their existence, trying to give voice to their feeling, that common woman is a universal woman whether educated or illiterate, whether rich or poor, whether Indian or American, they demand love and respect for their individuality. Love is the core emotion that binds people together. Every woman craves for such love and this is the chief woman
character. Search and respect for her identity in a male dominated society which is a hard task to get is another woman character which was dealt effectively in the work of Kamala Das and Adrienne Rich. They treat these basic characters in confessional tone and poignant style. Autobiographical notes of their poetry gives personal aroma and bring reader closer to them. It helps them to complete the journey of poetic self that is depersonalization of emotion from the personalization, from selfish self to creative self.

Before proceeding further it is important to get a glimpse of literary scenario of the countries these poets belong to. To know and understand the poetry of Adrienne Rich who is an American poet we must have a look on American Literature. In the history of American Literature, poetry arose first with the efforts made by the early colonists who tried their best to add their voices to English poetry in the seventeenth century. Unsurprisingly, their poetry often relied on contemporary British models such as poetic form, diction and theme. But in the nineteenth century, a distinctive American idiom began to emerge with the solid contribution made by Walt Whitman who won an enthusiastic audience, not only in the United States but also abroad.
In the twentieth century, American poetry was strengthened by Ezra Pound and Thomas Stearns Eliot. They became the most influential English Language poets during World War I. By the 1960s, young poets in America looked to their contemporaries and predecessors as models for the kind of poetry they wanted to write. The poetry of the 1970s saw a revival of interest in surrealism with the most prominent poets like Andrei Codrescu, Russell Edson and Maxine Chernoff. In the same period, poetry also embraced multiculturalism with the writings of African American poets namely Gwendolyn Brooks, Maya Angelou, Ishmael Reed, and Nikki Giovanni who came from a multiplicity of cultures. Even women poets like Adrienne Rich, Jean Valentine, and Amy Gerstler came forward and wrote poetry that deals with redemption, suffering and survival.

Adrienne Rich was born on May 16, 1929 in Baltimore, Maryland. Her father, Arnold Rice Rich, a doctor and assimilated Jew, was an authority on tuberculosis who taught at Johns Hopkins University. Her mother, Helen Gravely Jones Rich, a Christian, was a pianist and composer who, cleaving to social norms of the day, forsook her career to marry and have children. At the very young age she realized the place of a female in man dominated society.
In the poem *Sources* and *After Dark* documents her relationship with his father, describing how she worked hard to fulfill her father’s ambition for her moving into a world in which she was expected to excel even without giving her chance to explore a horizon of her interest. She even could not think anything for herself. She chased the path which was showed by his father; she became the shadow of her father’s ambition. When Ms Rich was in her last year at college at Radcliffe, W.H. Auden chose her first collection, “A Change Of World,” for publication in the Yale Younger Poets series, a signal honour. Released in 1951, the book, with its sober meaning, dutiful meter and scrupulous rhymes, was praised by reviewers for its impeccable command of form.

In 1953, Rich married Alfred Haskell Conrad, an economics professor at Harvard University and settled in Massachusetts. They had three sons—David in 1955, Pablo in 1957 and Jacob in 1959. And with this the second phase of struggle for a talented writer as a woman started. She found herself at a centre of a tug of war with one side, there was the traditional expectations of being a wife and mother and at another side there was a woman as an individual struggling for her existence. And this inner conflict
found his way into her work *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-law*. With her poems she examined and challenged social norms and the imbalance power between man and woman. In a bold manner she explores:

Your mind now, moulding like wedding cake,

*Crumbling to pieces under the knife-edge*

*Of mere fact. In the prime of your life.*

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

*A thinking woman sleeps with monsters.*

*The beak that grips her, she becomes.*

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

*The argument and feminam, all the old knives*

*That have rusted in my back, I drive in yours.* (3)

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

This thinking woman represents the women as daughter-in-laws, bound into the sets of roles which men have established and which female acquiesce.
In the year 1970, Rich separated from her husband. A suppressed woman attained liberty from the rotten institute of marriage which strangles a woman’s own identity. Later, Mr Conrad died of a gunshot wound to the head; the death was ruled a suicide. To the end of her life, Ms. Rich rarely spoke of it. She involved herself working for the women welfare as well as actively participated in social movements like civil rights and antiwar movements.

Ms. Rich effectively came out as a lesbian in 1976, with the publication of “Twenty-One Love Poems,” whose subject matter — sexual love between women — was still considered disarming and dangerous. Rich Seem to advocate lesbian existence. One could find her urging women to direct their energy towards other women rather than men and portraying lesbianism as an extension of feminism. Rich challenges notion of women’s dependence on men as social and economic supports, as well as for adult sexuality and psychological completion. She calls for what she describes as a greater understanding of lesbian experience, and believes that once such an understanding is obtained, these boundaries will be widened and women will
be able to experience the ‘erotic’ in female terms. She argues that part of the lesbian experience is an act of resistance specifically, a rejection of patriarchy and the male right to women. In the years that followed her poetry and prose ranged over her increasing self-identification as a Jewish woman, the Holocaust and the struggles of black women.


For Ms. Rich, the getting of literary awards was itself a political act to be reckoned with. On sharing the National Book Award for poetry in 1974 (the other recipient that year was Allen Ginsberg), she declined to accept it on her own behalf. Instead, she appeared onstage with two of that year’s finalists,
the poets Audre Lorde and Alice Walker; the three of them accepted the award on behalf of all women.

In 1997, in a widely reported act, Ms. Rich declined the National Medal of Arts, the United States government’s highest award bestowed upon artists. In a letter to Jane Alexander, then chairwoman of the National Endowment for the Arts, which administers the award, she expressed her dismay, amid the “increasingly brutal impact of racial and economic injustice,” that the government had chosen to honor “a few token artists while the people at large are so dishonored.”

Ms. Rich’s other laurels — and these she did accept — include the Bollingen Prize for Poetry, the Academy of American Poets Fellowship and the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize. She taught widely, including at Columbia, Brandeis, Rutgers, Cornell and Stanford Universities.

Ms. Rich dies at the age of 82 on March 27, 2012. Her survivors include her partner of more than 30 years, the writer Michelle Cliff; three sons, David, Pablo and Jacob, from her marriage to Professor Conrad; a sister, Cynthia Rich; and two grandchildren. What she wanted to achieve is achieved. Once she told the reason for writing poetry is the creation of society without
domination. And this is the main character of the poetry of Rich. On the one hand she tries to make women aware of their rights and compels them to stand for themselves and at the same time beware the men for the consequences of underestimating and demolishing the women power.

Women’s poetry in India has a distinct tradition of its own that seems to begin with the tribal songs of here early inhabitants, the Pali songs of Buddhism nuns of the 6th century B.C., the Sangam poets of Tamil like Andel and Auvaiyar, the devotional poets of the middle ages like Mira bai, ratna bai, Jana Bai, Aatikri Molla and Akkamahadevi, Muddupalani, Bahina bai, mahlaq bai Chanda and Sanciya Hosannamma of the 17th and 18th century and reaches up to Kamala Das’s mother, Balamani Amma. Kamala Das forwarded the legacy of her mother and other female poets ahead but in different manner and in different style.

Kamala Das was born on 31st March,1934 in Malabar, Kerala in a very orthodox and conservative family to a poet mother and a businessman. Her rebel starts from her home as she was a contrast with the environment of her house. She was unorthodox and revolutionary in her tone and nature. Ms. Das did not receive regular school education and never attended any college.
After the short lived European Missionary school education in Calcutta, she was sent to an elementary school at her native school in North Kerala, and was subsequently admitted to a boarding school run by Catholic nuns. However, she was again removed from there as she felt ill and was put under home tuition. The school years, however, were a period for moulding of Ms. Das’ very sensitive poetic sensibility. The English language she learnt and later chose it as a medium of her expression. She is a bilingual writer, writing mostly stories and memories in Malayalam and mostly poem in English.

Ms. Das developed her rebellious attitude and hatred towards patriarchy from her house where she witnessed a continuous quarrel between her mother and father. About her parents as a couple she writes in her autobiography My Story ‘were dissimilar and horribly mismatched.’ She saw her father discharging his duties very prudently and mechanically as a father and as a husband. She finds refuse in her grandmother and in the company of female servants. She longed for love but did not receive it from her intimate relations. Instead she faced several restrictions as being a female child. She forced to wear saree, she was prohibited to move freely, to talk freely. She was forced to tread the path, that she was hesitant to. She Writes:
...Dress in saree, be girl,

Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,

Be quarreler with servants. Fit in. Oh

Belong, cried the categorizers. Don’t sit

On walls or peep in through our lace-draped windows.(4)

It was her father who is responsible for her attitude of disapproval for male dominance and coarse feelings for male kind. She did not get fatherly affection and care from his father in early stage of her life. Being a girl she was neglected and it made her revolt against her womanhood. She denied her womanliness and even tried to behave like man. It could be changed if she would have got love and care in her marital relationship. But her rebellious attitude was later nourished by her callous and unkind husband. Her delicate and beautiful dreams about life were shattered badly under the burden of Patriarchy. She shares her experience in her poem:

... he drew a youth of sixteen into the

Bedroom and closed the door. He did not beat me

But my sad woman-body felt so beaten.

The weight of my breast and womb crushed me.(5)
Her body and soul underwent enormous suffering and torturing. As a result to react and response she wrote her first controversial and most popular book My Story- her autobiography, in which she expressed painful experiences of her life with frankness and boldness in an extraordinary and powerful language. She targeted aggressively to the familial and socio-cultural complexities and revealed the interiorities of a very sensitive feminine psyche.

Through her writing, she took the responsibility to show the path of liberalism from patriarchy and to lead a life of self respect as well as of independence. She wrote both in Malayalam and in English. In Malayalam she wrote under the name ‘Madhavikutty’. She received Poetry Award of the Asian PEN Anthology in1963, and Kerala Sahitya Academy Award in199 for her collection of short stories in Malayalam Thanuppu. Six collection of her poetry was published in English viz. Summer in Calcutta (1965), Descendants (1967), Old play House and Other Poems(1984, Collected Poems(1984), The Best of Kamala Das(1991) and Only Soul knows How to Sing(1996). Her most controversial book, her autobiography My Story was published in Malayalam and later translated by herself into English in1976.
She has also published novel The Alphabet of Lust in 1976 and three volumes of translations of her short stories viz. A Doll for the child Prostitute(1977), Padmavati, The Herlot and Other stories(1992) and The Sandal Trees and other Stories in 1998. In the year 2000, she published a collection of articles entitled ‘The Path Of the Columnist’. Her English poetry has been published in Europe in French, German, Swedish, and Serb-Croat translations. She wrote chiefly of love, its betrayal, and the consequent anguish, and Indian readers . . . responded sympathetically to her guileless, guiltless frankness with regard to sexual matters. Ms. Das abandoned the certainties offered by an archaic, and somewhat sterile, aestheticism for an independence of mind and body at a time when Indian women poets were still expected to write about teenage girlie fantasies of eternal, bloodless, unrequited love.

In December, 1999 Ms. Das converted to Islam under the name ‘Kamala Suraiyya’, started to wear the Chadar, Complete with black Cape and hood, with the clinging white head cloth underneath. Her conversion was rather controversial, among social and literary circles, with The Hindu calling it part of her "histrionics". She said she liked being behind the protective veil
of the purdah. Later, she felt it was not worth it to change one's religion and said that was not a correct step to change her religion. She died in May, 2009 and left a vacuum in Indo- Anglion literature. She was the voice of common women speaking for them, of them.

The chief woman character in the poetry of Kamala Das is Kamala Das herself. Her poem revolves around her emotions, her desires, her experience as a woman, incidences of her life and her growth as a woman. She uses personal pronoun ‘I’ in her every poem. This ‘I’ breaths in front of us, grows and talks before us. In her three poetry collection we can see the various aspects of her personality and witness the growth of her feminine sensibility. Her first poetry collection ‘summer in calcutta, published in 1965, opens with the poem ‘Dance of Eunuch’, has a tone of irony and temper of the entire volume. There are many poems based on love, but few of which speak of the grandeur belonging to a really exalting love- experience. ‘The Dance of Eunuch’ clearly shows, through an external, familiar situation, the poet’s sudden contact with ‘a man who had hurt me when I was fourteen years old’, she wanted him at any cost. This poem is powerful and courageous and it
displays an admirable sense of proportion in the use of imagery and metaphor.

The next poem, ‘The Freaks’ is a confessional poem where the speaking female voice unburdens the torture of her heart. It paints a rather helpless situation where the man is passive and the woman is burning with desire and thereby becomes helpless. This poem is depicting the lack of human communication and the failure of man-woman relationship. They have lived together for long but like islands unto themselves. While they intend or pretend to make love, their minds never meet, like the East and the West, their minds wander apart. What she grudges most is the man’s shallowness, his physical hunger and his lip-love. He could never cross the skin’s surface as she clearly shows it in the following lines:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Can’t this man with} \\
\text{Nimble finger tips unleash} \\
\text{Nothing more alive than the} \\
\text{Skin’s lazy hunger? (6)}
\end{align*}
\]
Though there is unison of the physique, the hearts never met. Her heart remained an empty cistern. Her flamboyant lust is a defence-mechanism rather than her inner urge. There is an obvious sense of void created spiritually despite their physical commingling.

Another poem, ‘In Love’, brings the poet face to face with an inquiry whether she could call her sexual experience ‘love’. It radiates with heat and passionate experience. In ‘Winter’ also carries the emblem of the warmness of sexual act, of her soul groping for roots in his body. The identification of love with physical desire is also found in her poem, ‘A Relationship’. She states that ‘It was my desire that made him male/and beautiful’. The poem ‘Spoiling The Name’ mocks at the significance generally attached to words and, figuratively, to abstractions. A name is an abstraction, and in a woman’s case borrowed from someone’s else, it is a weight and a burden, as all abstractions are. She, therefore, asks:

    ....why should this name, so

    Sweet-sounding, enter at all the room

    Where I go to meet a man

    Who gives me nothing but himself, who
This poem shows Mrs. Das’s craftsmanship, but is rhetorical in tone.

Human significance of the restlessness and bewilderment or disappointment and gloom experienced by womenfolk in our society is much greater since the contradictory pressures are present in their life in heightened form. The conscious identity won by these women through education cannot find any meaningful expression in the roles thrust upon them by our society. While men could cultivate the realm of personal relationships as a reserved area for their liberal ideals, women are said to have denied this privilege. There has been hardly any opportunity available to a gifted female who wants to assert her freedom and individuality in the restricted field of man-woman relationship.

Kamala Das, therefore, defies the sensibility mentioned above and her poetry has a special force and ringing appeal for us primarily because of her honesty and candour with which she asserts her rights to exist as an individual with a distinctive identity and to be her genuine self in the midst of all the restrictive
pressures even if this involves breaking the module of traditional ethics and propriety. Her poetry voices a vehement protest against the senseless restrictions which compel a sensitive and intelligent woman to suffer. She, therefore, raises her voice high which is one of the important tenets of feminism, and is solely to add to the rhapsody of the readers.

The other poem, ‘An Apology to gautama’ also constructs a dialectical opposition between the ascetic and the sensual, between Gautama and her own man. The opposition is actually between two kinds of eyes, two kinds of voices and two kinds of faces, and rather two modes of living:

......while your arms hold

*My woman- form, his hurting arms*

*Hold my very soul.*(8)

Thus the poem focuses on this vital contrast for its strength.

A sense of gloominess is also felt in her poem, ‘The Fear of the Year’. Meanwhile, ‘My Grandmother’s House’ has the depiction of another ecstacy of wild despair:
........ You cannot believe, darling,

Can you, that I live in such a house and

Was proud, and loved.... I who have lost

My way and beg now stranger’s door to

Receive love, at least in small change? (9)

And in ‘The Wild Bongainvillea’ we are to listen to the poet’s poignancy and how she groaned/ And moaned, and constantly yearned for a man from/ another town....’ In the ‘Too early The Autumn Sights’ also evokes a mood of premature dryness within

Too early the autumn sights

Have come, too soon my lips

Have lost their hunger, too soon

The singing birds have

Left. (10)

This poem is conventional in mood still Kamala Das’ is able to compress or squeeze out of common images a bit of visionary quality.
'Visitors to the City' is another blatant and passionate etching of a scene composed of ‘sights and sounds’ offered by one morning on Strand Road. ‘Punishment in Kindergarten’ is warm and muffled, and recounts the picnic of the poetess at Victoria Gardens to which she and her classmates were taken, and the incident which followed it. She was all alone near the hedge, while other girls were playing at a distance. The poem demonstrates the poet’s potential to smell the flowers as well as the pain of being sighted. It also suggests us about the feminist sense of isolation and her desire to be free.

Mrs. Das presents feminist movement through her poetry. She discovers the male-hegemony from the inner core of her feminine consciousness. Her search for identity is sex oriented; and therefore, she delineates her feminist voice through sex-imagery. She is every woman suffering passive pathos in a male hegemonic set-up. Her free mention of sex, her husband’s pride of having had contacts with ‘sluts and Nymphomaniacs’, a pair of beautiful breasts and a faint musk-rat smell in her perspiration: all these confessions deserve applause and appreciation but her statement, ‘adultery is common
with women residing in cities’ may not be positively agreed to because this view may hamper the general outlook of women in the society. Our societal structure ought to create enough rooms for those women who would like to preserve the de facto sanctity of husband-wife relationship in sex

Her Poem ‘The siesta’ is accompanied by sleepiness ‘the sun-lit tank’, which brings ‘an anonymous peace to her, or with dreams which ‘glow pearl-white’. But what the mysterious siesta brings to her is neutralized by her supposed inability to meet this alien world which talks of gods and casual sins. However, the poet is concerned more with the vulnerability of the ‘anonymous peace’ of the siesta, its inability to withstand the challenge of the wakeful world rather than with the siesta itself. The display of the potency of this challenge is the poet’s oblique commitment to it.

Mrs. Das projects a self-contained mood of sensuous luxury in her title-poem, ‘Summer in Calcutta’. The image of the sun in April in the poem brings a sense of sensuous repletion to the poet. In it we find the warm intoxication which inspires as well as relaxes so that she comes to the statement, ‘my worries doze’ and

..... wee bubble ring
My glass, like a bride’s
Nervous smile, and meet
My lips, Dear, forgive
This moment’s lull in
Wanting you, the blur
In memory. (11)

The poet celebrates the mood of temporary triumph over ‘the defeat of love’. It is an Indian poet’s creative reaction to the torture of the Indian summer. What distinguishes Kamala Das’s reaction is her unconsciousness intimacy with this torture.

‘With Its Quite Tounge’ expresses the poet’s agonized concern with the wretched coldness of heart. Another poem ‘My Morning Tree’ deals with the familial theme of desperate longing for fulfillment. Its images are sharp; structure is carefully organized; and mood poignantly objectified. The poet looks forward to the moment of the blossoming of ‘a sudden flower’ in it, though the images like the ‘ugly tree’ and the ‘fleshless limbs’ of the tree give no hope of this blossoming. And also reflects her thought of sterility of
being a woman. The poem is one of the dark despairs; and the sense of fulfillment which so strongly dominates poems like ‘Winter’, ‘A Phone Call in the Morning’, ‘Love’, ‘Spoiling the Name’, ‘In Love’ is here imagined and telescoped but not without involving the cost of an almost brutal irony, for the blossoming may not only come too late but may be the ens itself. The ‘passive’ limbs of her desires and passion will flower into a ‘red,red morning flower’ of death.

Like ‘The Dance of Eunuch’, ‘The testing of the Sirens’ has a befitting close. The poet wakes up from a night full of love and lust having a sense of mental loneliness, goes through a drive with another ‘a pock marked face’ and while he is taking her photograph, arises with a keen desire for love which is doomed to remain unfulfilled. Her relationship with either of the lovers is a rootless and detached loyalty of the moment, to the first (of the night) that of the limbs and to the second (with the pock-puckered mouth) that of ‘a smile’ which is ‘such a detached thing’. The poem immortalizes the poet’s attachment to one of her family friends, a young man of eighteen years, who used to take her out to Victoria Memorial, photographing her against trees
and against trees and against flowing water, and entertaining her with Hindi film songs.

We have a different category of poems like ‘The Flags’, ‘The Forest Fire’, ‘The wild Bougainvillea’, ‘Someone Else’s Song’, and ‘An Introduction’, in her work, Summer in Calcutta. In these poems, there is an attempt to rise above the ‘private voice’ and depict a larger panorama of experience. The technique is almost always one of assuming a vaster identity as in ‘Someone Else’s song’:

\[
I\text{ am a million, million, people} \\
Talking\text{ all at once, with voices} \\
Raised\text{ in clamour, like maids} \\
At village-wells.(12)
\]

Or, in ‘The Stranger and I’:

\[
I\text{’ve seen you in restaurant, all gay} \\
And smoke-filled, on the seat behind \\
The\text{ Pillar, drinking joylessly your} \\
Sweetened tea, while your left hand
\]
Softly trembling, crouches on the

Table clock like a wounded bird...(13)

The tone of Kamala Das’s poems depicted in this volume focuses betrayal and presents the poet as a prisoner of her own loneliness and isolation aggravated by complex moods. For instance, the poem, ‘The Wild Bougainvillea’ shows the satisfaction of a peculiar personal need as a necessary distraction from her mood of sadness and loneliness. ‘It is good world and packed with distractions’. The poem ‘An introduction’ is an open witty piece of self-revelation, and is a beautiful statement of her poetic credo, her attitude to language and experience. The crux of her poem is to have the freedom to be herself. She takes a turning from normal paths to exhibit her true identity. ‘Fit in’, said they. ‘Belong’ cried the categorizers. But she doesn’t listen to them. Indeed, she has transformed her alienation from ‘critics, friends, visiting cousins’, who say, ‘don’t write in English’, into a larger and more universal alienation based on the sexual, social and artistic perspective:

I met a man, loved him, call
Him not by any name, he is every man

Who wants a woman, just as I am every

Woman who seeks love.(14)

It is, however, clear from the above that the poems of Mrs. Das in Summer in Calcutta are marked with a sense of universality that is self imposed and not natural for her. Personal feeling and mod of Kamala Das are found to have outweighed the impersonal ones, for sustained universality is not within the poet’s reach. She is found to be in her own world and her world is to denounce patriarchal hegemony.

Her second volume ‘The Descendants’ is published in 1967, has poems that shows the sensuousness of her character. There are twenty–three poems in all and these all poems are the manifestation of her favourite theme of sexual love. This treatment of sex brings about the bearings of carnal urge in woman. The question of death is also foremost in this collection. It is, by and large, bitterly death conscious, perhaps death-obsessed. Some of these poems like the ‘Invitation’, ‘Composition’ and ‘The descendants’ seem to be solemnized by compassion or humility under a false impression. The reality
is that there seems to be yearning for the pseudo-metaphysical poise and the inability to reckon with emotional defeat and frustration, with a sense of nothingness:

To be frank

I have failed.

I feel my age and my

Uselessness. (15)

The poetess is actually rhapsodized by a sense of the smouldering ‘secret’ and ‘isolation’ that ‘I am so alone’, and that life is a colourless design of crumbling patterns, as we find in her poem, ‘A request’ which is shown in the following:

When I die

Do not throw the meat and bone away

But pile them up

And

Let them tell

By their smell
What life was worth

On this earth

What love was worth

In the end.(16)

The above lines delineate the insignificance and meaninglessness of the poetess’ life. The situation she has been thrust upon the sterility she experiences is being conveyed with a sense of sourness and bitterness. Her poems like ‘Shut Out That Moon’ and ‘Neutral Tones are examples of discontentment. The defiance of all positive in life reminds us of the poetical tone which Thomas Hardy employs. The title poem ‘The Descendants’, frontiers on nihilism which moves the poet in a direction opposite to the faith in the essential continuity of life. This poem ends with a ring of finality: ‘we are not going to be redeemed, or to made new.’

Another poem of this volume ‘The Suicide’ is written as a conversation between the poet and the sea. The thematic content of this poem is found to be based on the poet’s contemplated or suggested suicide, but the poem finally defies it through a rejuvenated sense of life. The body and the soul,
according to her, are inseparable, she can not choose between a physical death and spiritual death. For her, the sea is the source of a constant distraction, a nagging threat, and invites her to negation:

The sea is garrulous today. Come in,

Come in. What do you lose by dying, and

Besides, your losses are my gains.(17)

This poem offers her dissolution with a tinge of seduction. The vastless sea may also suggest the insatiable desire in a woman.

Another poem ‘A request’ is program with the sense of ‘death’ which also finds a parallelism through ‘Dear night, be my tomb’of “ Substitute “ and merge into the unredeemed darkness of our own fate, of the wounds and the cross, of the fire and ‘the hungry earth’ “The Descendants” which would devour us in the end.

In ‘The Invitation’, We witness the duality of death while the sea offers one kind of death, a complete negation, her lover whom she can’t disobey offers another, metaphorical death i.e. the feeling of ‘lying on a funeral pyre or with a burning forehead’. The dictum she employs suggests a state of delirium and
the feeling of torture that seems to accompany her more recent treatment of sexual love in it, we find that she reject the way of the sea and prefers to shrink or grow in her own way. Although the man has gone for good, the poet still haunted by the memory offer past experience and is warmed in doing so. She cannot forget the self –content intensity of the moment a sexual love:

All through that summer’s afternoons we lay

On bed, our limbs insert, cells expanding

Into throbbing suns. The heat had

Blotted our thoughts..................(18)

The above lines show an explicitly suffusing organic warmth and vivify the pervading heat of summer days.

The poem “Ferns” arrests sexual love in an image of self – mocking and self-devouring intensity with suggests that perhaps there is a sense in which her glorification of physical love carries with it an element of disenchantment.

The poem ‘Convicts’, is an evidence of physical love in elemental terms of physical labour and heat, and a physical experience shown below:
That was the only kind of love,
This hacking at each other’s parts
Like convicts hacking breaking clods
At noon. We were earth under hot
Sun. There was a burning in our
Veins and the cool mountain nights did
Nothing to lessen heat. When he
And I were one, we were neither
Male nor female. (19)

This is indeed, a sensuous poetic passage during amorous implication to the readers.

‘Substitute’ is a poem which hovers amidst poignancy and truculence. In it, we find the need to conform to the convention of a hypocritical society and makes one’s feeling of emptiness all the more painful. The poem is full of pathos and is found to be ironical in its meditative refrain:

It will be all right If I join clubs
And flirt a little over telephone.
It will be all right, it will be all right.

I am the type that endures,

It will be all right, it will be all right

It will be all right between the world and me.(20)

This refrain experiences an abrupt intrusion of the image of crows over the market square waving violently but aimlessly in the sky ‘with raucous cries’ breaks the spell only to prepare the ground for the suggestion of the lack of ‘mental contact’ between the man and woman in “Our bodies after lovemaking”. The tone of this poem is in the manner of Prufrock’s ‘Love Song’. The pursuit of love in it is merely mechanical without any meaning.

Another poem concentrating on sexual love is ‘The Looking Glass’ which is shown below:

...notice the perfection

of his limbs, his eyes reddening under

Shower, the shy walk across the bathroom floor,
Dropping towels, and the jerky way he
urinates. All the fond details that make
Him male and your only man. Gift him all,
Gift him what makes you woman, the scent of
Long hair, the musk of sweet between the breasts,
The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your
Endless female hungers. (21)

The tone of the above lines shows close attachment and a ringing indulgence.

The poem, “Captive” presents us the love of Kamala Das as an ‘an empty gift’, ‘a gilded empty container’ and herself as the prisoner of the womb’s blinded hunger, ‘the muted whisper at the core’. Its tonic significance is found to be ambiguous and the theme of sexual love receives greater relevance from the charms of creation, and of childbirth. The same treatment of theme finds expression also in her “Jaisurya”, which amalgamates the narrative and the meditative and which also details the whole gamut of feeling preceding and following the birth of son. It brings together light and
darkness, and fire and water, to weave a pattern of feeling which holds itself up with the joy of creation. It is noteworthy that meaningful things happen to the poetess or around noon time under the virgin whiteness of the sun. There was a day of separation from the child which is substantiated by the line ‘separated from darkness that was mine’.

The newly born child is shown with a placement of ‘war’, ‘bloodshed and despair’ in ‘the white flowers’. The earnest prayer wishing her son along life in the face of the outer threat of violence and death is strengthened by the contrast between the white flowers (symbolizing peace, long life) and the red (symbolizing for blood, mortality, anarchy) of the cherry wine, the rose. In it, we also witness the gesture of heroism is shown below:

Today some of us will rise and sing of love.

In voices never as sweet before, for love like life

Is sweetest just before it ends.(22)

But the glasses are found to be ‘cold like a dead man’s palm’ added by a sense of horror and a ghastly wailing which tends to subdue the poet’s prayer from harming the child.
Kamala Das is found to have a high sense of modernism. She writes with rebellious attitude denouncing old customs and traditional practices. Like every modernist who is a rebel, also rebels against the custom ridden and orthodox society dominated by man. She would not keep her hair long but cutting short and wear trousers and which is enough a sign to defy the established order and to begin assessing of the characteristic of being a feminist. She found herself in a custom ridden and old fashioned society with patriarchal dominance. According to her, these men looked funny, repulsive and proud. They were also self-centered men who tried to look different and acted differently from women folk. Women, on the other hand, are dolls in the hands of men. Kamala Das could not adjust herself to this situation and, therefore, she highlighted the sensitivity of her mind through her poems. She wishes that modern woman need freedom, self respect and they are prepared to shoulder responsibility. Her poems crystallized the suppressed tension in the mind of woman, who are reluctant to speak like her. Kamala Das, therefore, has expressed her emotions freely and openly on the zone of sexual games through her poems, making herself controversial and at the same time world famous.
Kamala Das published her third collection of poetry ‘The Old Playhouse and Other Poems’ in 1973. It contains thirty three poems at all; however, fourteen of these poems are from the old collections. Hence only thirteen new poems were there in this volume. This volume delves deep into the self of the poet. It tells us that love is perhaps a footpath in experiencing and learning about one’s true self. It is an avenue for the realization of one’s own personality, and that the pangs and agonies associated with love are entities that can not be done away with in life. It is mainly addressed to ‘you’, to the husband, who wanted to hinder her from freedom of movement and action through his subtle menoeuvrings. It lodges a protest against the constraints of married life. It tries to thwarted the restrictions canonised by patriarchal foces in the society. In it is felt the crystalisation of the favour of domesticity, the routine of lust, artificial comfort and amle domination and can be treated as a protest to patriarchy.

Kamala das looks for a kind of freedom; a freedom with a wider horizon; a freedom that may be treated as complete or absolute. A freedom that explores love to its zenith or to its nadir, and which is not fettered by the chains of
patriarchy. However, she realized that all these are impossible to be achieved in the human life.

‘You’ in the poem is possibly the husband, who wants to tame the swallow who is the woman and thus deprived her of her natural freedom. The ‘monstrous ego’ of this husband becomes under fire herein and the poet has been reduced to a much insignificant labour. As a result of his egoitism, her mind becomes like ‘an old playhouse with all lights put out’. And she feels the emptiness of the natural mirth and thinking capacity. The following line from ‘The old Playhouse’ will show as to how she spells out from freedom to imprisonment:

..... you call

_Me wife,

_I was taught to break saccharine into your tea and

_To offer at the right moments the vitamins. Cowering

_Beneath your monstrous ego I ate the magic loaf and

_Became a dwarf. I lost my will and reason, to all your

_Questions I mumbled in coherent replies.(23)
Here the woman suggestively protests against the male ego and assertion.

The relationship of man and woman as portrayed by Kamala das, though filled with discontentment and disharmony, is relationship with a difference. This marriage alliance spells out exotica and the reader is made to listen with amazement. It carries us to a world of striptease and vestiges of surprises by her overpowering artistic techniques.

In most of her poems Kamala Das tries to liberate the general lot of womenfolk by liberating herself. Her poems talk to women to be freed from the bondage of slavery in male dominated society. She claims for perfect freedom in personal matter, chiefly in relations to love and sex. Her own personal life is a clear example of woman’s identity and liberty. She tries to combat against the age –old customs in the society. For this, she even deserts her own religion to maintain her status independently. According to her men are emotionally deficient and incapable of possessing a passionate regard for concrete reality. She, therefore, celebrates a free womanhood; she gives a free individuality to her woman persona. Das’ poetic career is an incessant quest for self. She is laden with sensuality and compassionate urge for sex.
‘Blood ’is the only new poem in the longer genre just like ‘composition’ and ‘The Suicide’. Here the onrush of emotions is profusely restraints. It is purely in the manner of autobiographical sketch, and the poet’s nostalglia for the old house and for great grand mother who lived in it is convincingly evoked. However, we are to see to it that she is not trying to idealize the house not the people associated with it; she also does not attempt to reaching out into the history of the house of a long span of three hundred years beyond what she herself knows of it. Presently, we are given picturesque scene of an old house with the walls ‘cracked and torn and moistened by the rains’, the whinning windows, he fallen tiles and the rats scampering hither and thither. The grandmother, who is ‘really simple’, ‘religious’, and proud offered ‘oldest blood’, is portrayed with humour and detachment.

In the poem ‘Nani’ we find that the poetess mingles gravity with irreverence. She is haunted by the suicide of the pregnant maid who hanged herself in the privy while the poet was yet a child. The pregnant maid ‘the dark plump one, who bathed me near the well’, said she and who hanged herself in the privy reflects her opinion in the following lines:
A clumsy puppet, when the wind blew

Turning gently on the rope, it seemed

To us who were children then, that nani

Was doing, to delight us, a comic

Dance.....(24)

After some years the poetess enquires of her grandmother about the dead maid. She pretends ignorance and the poetess remarks:

With that question ended Nani. Each truth

Ends thus with a query. It is this designed

Deafness that turns mortality into

Immortality, the definite into

The soft indefinite.(25)

With the very passage of time the incident is forgotten by the grandmother but not by the poet. We also see that poem finally ends with a deep sense of
serenity accompanied by the term ‘clotted piece’ of the dead, but the paradox is that the imagery evolving out of the peace of the dead does not belong to the world of the dead but to that of the living world.

The poem ‘Gino’ begins on a note of warning and fear. In it the kiss of a lover is compared to the bite of a krait who ‘fills the bloodstream with its accursed essence’. Subsequently, she becomes love-conscious, and at the same time, conscious of the sense of death which is also the essence of living. There is a conflict between the desire to experience this poisonous love, possibly love outside the wedlock, and the difficulty to ‘dislodge the inherited memory of a touch’. But if this difficulty is anyhow solved, thoughts of the triumphant love haunts the poet and she dreams of ‘obscure hands’, of wardboys, sepulchral, wheeling me through long corridors/to the x-ray room’s dark interior, ‘of aeroplanes/Bursting red in the sky’, ‘of fat/half-caste children, lovelier than god’s, and of ‘drinking wine in verandahs’. And in a sudden fit of thought, she realizes that her dreams are unreal and that the burden of the body growing unattractive and gross is more real:

_This body that I were without joy, this body burdened_
With lenience, slander, toy, owned by man of

Substance, shall perhaps wither, battling with My darlings

Impersonal lust.or ,it shall grow gross

And reach large proportion before it end.(26)

The poet is obviously conjuring up here her sense of disease, death and decay of everything beautiful.

The ‘Glass’ meanwhile focuses the attention on the proneness of the disintegration of love-experience and also of the body. There is an indepth sense of pathos when the poet says:

I went to him for half an hour

As pure woman, pure misery

Fragile glass, breaking

Crumbling...(27)
In this poem, the anxiety of the poetess is voiced through a Freudian search for misplaced father figure. She is seen moving from man to man in the search for her true home, however, there is again a sense of wasted effort purported in the prolonged search. The poem ‘Glass’ thus becomes a clinical version as an attempt to look for him and the ‘misplaced’ father now everywhere.

In ‘The Prisoner’, the poetess has compared herself to the convict who studies his prison’s geography with disbelief and hope. The situation is shown by the lines:

\[ I \text{ study the trappings} \]

\[ Of \text{ your body, dear love,} \]

\[ For \text{ I must someday find} \]

\[ An \text{ escape from its snare.} (28) \]

The term ‘trapping’ is very important, for it suggests ‘the trapping of lust from which she has to free herself to know true love’ as well as ‘the soul’s cry against its mortal dress’. Usually the convict tries to escape from the prison only to return to his normal course of life. What Mrs. Das suggests
here is the reality that there is no exact freedom from imprisonment of this world or of lust.

‘The Millionaires a Marine Drive’ is both serious and meditative in nature, its subject being the indispensable alienation of the woman. The kind of warmness which she received from the grandmother still haunts her; the reason is that no man has been able to give her such an authentic love. The grandmother is shown here as an embodiment of tenderness and warmth and contrasted with her as in the following manner:

....all the hands

*The great brown thieving hands groped beneath my Clothes, their fire was that of an arsonist’s*  
*Warmth was not their arm, they burnt my cities*

*Down......(29)*

The touch of her grandmother was soft and tender. Her patting and pampering had always made Kamala Das’ ailing heart relieved. But the touch of her husband and other men as we have seen above is, not at all consoling. Their touch has the similarity of the hands of ‘theft’ which is
illegal, paltry and outlawed. Groping her clothes and burning her cities down would, therefore, show the destructive incendiary devices employed by men to suppress and mar feminine interests in the society.

It is thus clear that there was, in fact, not any mental contact between her person and her husband. What she wanted between her person and her husband. What she wanted above all, was a loveable ‘identity’ with him, but her situation and circumstances brought her only the pain of growing old with a freedom she had never asked for. From her first volume to her third volume we can see a shift in Kamala Das’ approach to love theme; and from the grandeur of sexual love she now moves towards a general discontentment with the male character which urges to dwarf the kind of woman in her.

Like Kamala Das Adrienne Rich herself is the main woman character of her poetry but she does not always in direct conversation with the reader. She is a woman mouth piece and speaks on behalf of womenfolk. She explores the complications of intimate relationships throughout her career. Her work has mapped out uncharted territory of both personal and global significance. Rich's poetry expresses not only the experiences of a woman, a feminist, and
a lesbian, but the experiences of all human beings working to maintain intimate relationships in a difficult world. The distinguishing quality of her poetry is that it documents the image of woman in American society as it passes through varying phases. In addition to this it traces her own growth as a person and poet. First volume of Rich ‘A Change of World’ commended her craftsmanship and her obvious love of the medium. This collection was marked for her capacity for detachment from the self and an intuitive grasp of subtle matters like proportion consistency of diction and tone and the matching of these with the subject matter. There is vide range of themes in this volume like the sense of imminent doom is expressed in ‘Storm Warnings,’ the imperfect nature of the relationship between man and woman in ‘An Unsaid Word,’ the lack of communication in ‘Stepping Backward,’ the metaphysical scepticism of ‘For the Conjunction of Two Planets’ and the fact of mutability in ‘A Change of World’. ‘Storm Warnings’ also alerts us to the precariousness of one's situation that the ‘shattered fragments’ of customs and practices cannot avert. In ‘Aunt Jennifer's Tigers’ the protagonist's proclivity for rebellion and longing for independence are quite conspicuous. These are themes with which she is preoccupied later in her career too.
In The Diamond Cutters, her second anthology, Rich introduces the theme of homelessness which has special significance in feminist poetics. Homelessness with its accompanying ache of filial nostalgia is reflected in ‘The Middle Aged’ which Vendler calls the first perfect poem of Rich’:

For to be young

Was always to live in other people's houses

Whose peace, if we sought it, had been made by others,

Was ours at second-hand and not for long

. . . They were so kind,

Would have given us anything, the bowl of fruit

Was filled for us, there was a room upstairs

We must call ours: but twenty years of living

They could not give . . . (30)

Snapshots of a Daughter-in-law is a breakthrough volume of Rich’s poetry where Rich stood as a strong feminist. It stands as a watershed in her poetic development. It is a powerful and angry poem that makes an important
statement about Rich’s feminism. She wrote this poem over a period of two years when she was married to a Harvard Economist and was a young mother with three children like the daughter-in-law in the poem. It expresses her interest in resisting and rebelling both as a woman and as a poet. She writes of women whose gifts have been buried and aborted and whose very beings have been thwarted and silenced. It depicts a woman of the period of transition, especially the sixties and seventies, when women had become conscious of the many reactions and burdens imposed upon them by the male-dominated society, family, culture, and literature. The speaker in the poem sees herself as a daughter-in-law without a personal identity of dignity, or as a person who exists in relation to others and structures. That is why, due to her frustrations and anxiety, she is aggressive. This sense of frustrations, guilt, and suppressed anger is a major theme of the poem. It also discusses how men have long suppressed women by denying the possibility that they might possess any exceptional talent or passion for anything other than housework. The poem is divided into ten sections and its interpretation can begin even in the title. The title “Snapshots” suggests carelessly taken photographs of family members at unguarded moments. They have none of the studied formality of photographs taken in a studio or by a professional
photographer. “Daughter-in-law” is an intriguing term. Rich chooses a “daughter-in-law,” as the focus of the poem rather than sister, daughter or any of numerous other female roles because the opposition between the young woman and her mother-in-law presents an effective vehicle for comparing the status of women in their respective generations. In representing generational disparity with a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship, however, Rich establishes the connection between her women through their relations with men; namely, the son and husband. In other words, through the example of a female relationship, that is, the product of interaction with men, Rich effectively demonstrates the magnitude of the male influence over the lives and even the relations between women–female slavery.

In Leaflets and The Will to Change the poet re-enters the world with the desire to use language for healing but is repeatedly defeated. In her poem "Cartographies of Silence" Rich analyses the polemics of silence. She tries to bring home the point that silence cannot be equated with absence; it is presence of a kind which has not yet gained recognition:

Silence can be a plan
Rigorously executed
the blueprint to a life
It is a presence
It has a history a form
Do not confuse it
with any kind of absence

..........................

The scream of an illegitimate voice
It has ceased to hear itself, therefore
It asks itself

How do I exist?

This was the silence I wanted to break in you (31)

The quest for the identity of woman in a male-oriented society is an important feature of the poetry of Rich. In another volumes ‘Diving into the Wreck’ the quest is made manifest since the theme of the poem is directly that of a quest and the woman in the poem empowers herself to undertake this adventurous task. In a number of other poems such as ‘The Demon
Lover,’ ‘The Sisters,’ ‘Transcendental Etude,’ ‘Prospective Immigrants Please Note’ and ‘Integrity,’ the same theme of quest is dealt with even though it is not fore grounded as in ‘Diving’. What prompts her to set out on such a quest is her eagerness to have a comprehensive vision of the universe and a specific understanding of the essence of her own life. Probably it is ‘that American specificity’ of Rich which critics have pointed out as a lovable trait in her that makes her set out in search of her being. But it seems to her that

\[ a \text{ lifetime is too narrow to} \]

\[ \text{understand it all,} \]

\[ \text{beginning with the huge} \]

\[ \text{rockshelves that underlie all life(32)} \]

In "Double Monologue" written in 1960, she says:

\[ \text{Since I was more than a child} \]

\[ \text{trying on a thousand faces} \]

\[ \text{I have wanted one thing: to know} \]

\[ \text{simply as I know my name} \]
It is the same idea with which she is preoccupied in "Readings of History."

Another poem composed in the same year. Here we find the poet investigating the past in an effort to perceive the present better, endeavoring to ‘locate herself in the historical flux’. She finds herself at a loss when she is confronted with history. What gives that special touch to Rich's poetry is her rare insight into the basic problems of human culture that have generally been overlooked. This poet ‘sworn to lucidity’ to borrow her own words in portraying one of her women personae, perceives those problems with clarity and with a ‘will to change’ the decadent culture suggests alternatives which may turn out to be crucial.

The urge to find themselves as an individual is the main character in the work of Adrienne Rich and Kamala Das. Apart from it other characters in the work of them are confessional mode, autobiographical elements, feministic trend etc. All the characters would be studied in detail in next chapters. Voice of both the poets would be heard and understood on the same background that would leave an impact on the minds of reader.
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