Chapter 4

Confessional Mode
Confessionalism- A main character in the poetry of Adrienne Rich and Kamala Das

Confessionalism is the chief character in the poetry of modern feminist writers or one can say it is the indispensible part of feminist literature. This is the confession came into being after churning process of female psyche. The heart that was traumatic and mind that was perplexed due to dominance nature of male kind, sought relief through confession. Confession is the outcome or by product of ‘Virodh’ in Sanskrit and ‘conflict’ in English. ‘A Handbook to literature ‘by Harmon Willium defines conflict as-

“The Struggle that grows out of the interplay of two opposing forces. Conflict provides interest, response and tension. At least one of the opposing forces is customarily a person. This person usually the protagonist, may be involved
in conflicts of four different kinds: 1) a struggle against nature, as in Jack London’s ‘To build a Fire’. 2) a struggle against another person, usually the antagonist, as in Stevenson’s ‘Treasure Island’ and most melodrama; 3) a struggle against society, as in the novels of Dickens and George Eliot; or 4) a struggle for mastery by two elements within the person as in the Restoration heroic drama or in Macbeth; 5) A fifth possible kind of conflict is often cited, the struggle against fate or destiny; however, except where the Gods themselves actively appear, such a struggle is realized through the action of one or more of the four basic conflicts. Seldom do we find a simple, single conflict but rather a complex one partaking of two or even all of the preceding elements.” 1

Virodh arises when an individual’s Vivek impels him/her to do something and outer forces like social norms, law, rituals, etc. compels him/her to do something else. Vivek or conscience drags him/her to other pole to choose the path which is logically correct but lack of courage doesn’t allow him/her to accept and follow inner voice, Virodh or conflict arises. Conscience is a part of mind that tells an individual whether his/her action is right or wrong and always put forth a person on side of truth or righteousness. Active and
alert conscience is the mother of all conflicts of the world. Conflict or Virodh is noticed mostly creative. Conflict of growth as it has been analysed becomes creative. Now the question arises why it has become creative? There are two kinds of bodies in human being: 1) visible and physical that reveals the composition of materiality and that is also the abode of egoism; another is that esoteric body that consists of conscience invisible. So there remains consistent strive between visible or the buddhi (intelligence) and the conscience – the invisible. When a man comes to the appropriate unification of the sensibility with the rational power he/she comes to confess out of his/her conflict the things he/she has done in her/his life whatever forms of doings might be.

It is a churning process of mind and outcome is always for the welfare of human kind. When an individual finds himself/herself in two Virodhabhasi (contradictory) situations where it becomes difficult to choose one or to deny another and it becomes utterly impossible to avoid it, confession is the only way to recover from this psychological trauma. It saves the individual to be trapped in any of mental agony or disorder. To some extend it is a relief camp for the victims of psychological stressed soul. The relief attained through
confession is great but to agree to opt it is a matter of great courage. But once decided to tread the path of confession honestly there is no way to look back to worries, traumas or agonies. It opens a new realm of peace and forgiveness which ends the complexities of life. The term confession is usually added with Christianity- Christian philosophy, where a person confesses in front of a priest about his crime to release his soul from guilt conscious. It is very secretive process and believed that confession purifies a soul and brings a person closer to God. In British dictionary confession is described as religious psychoanalytic, criminal and legal settings refer to the revelation of a shameful secret, as in a sin.

Confession is the purification of soul and Poetry is the expression of soul. Hence it is obvious that confession is the integral part of this literary sphere. Confession is the quality of sensitive souls and poets are the most sensitive one. From ancient times not directly but through their poems these sensitive souls were sharing their conflict, their contradictory deep thoughts, their guilt etc. with the reader. By this they themselves were relieved and by reading their work readers too get involved and establish a relationship with the idea. Hence this co-relation of thought makes reader also relieved. We can also
find this confessional tone in the work of earlier writers like Rousseau, Wordsworth, Byron and Whitman. Confessional literature has its existence ever since man began to give expression to his intimate feelings. But at the same time this term ‘confession’ is invented and popularized in recent years by feminist writers but seeds were sown long back. Credit for the invention of this word ‘confession’ in literary context goes to American poets of 1950s and 1960s like John Berryman, Robert Lowell, Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath and W.D. Andgross. They are the founder of a new stream of poetry i.e. confessional poetry. Confessional poetry is a hybrid product of poetry that came into being as a result of the popularization of the psychological studies, the spread of the Freudian and Jungian theories and the emergence of the feminist movement. It is an analytical observation of incidents from one’s own life whether tinged with comedy or irony, self loathing or compassion. It is a medium to express poet’s deepest emotion through poems and about the most personal subject. Though feeling and emotions are the key note of or the most important element of the poetry but confessional poetry differs on the ground that its content are not of traditional. As romantic poets like Wordsworth, Shelly, Coledrige added a new chapter in the literature by making common things or people or unimportant events as a subject matter
of their poetry and brought a revolution in the field of literature. They changed the mindset of the people and appealed the heart of even an ordinary people. The same revolution was brought by modern poets like Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, Elizabeth Bishop, Adrienne Rich, in America and Kamala Das, Shobha Day, Anita Desai etc. in India. And it proved the strongest tool for the feminist writers as it worked for the purgation of those emotions which were difficult to confide to heart as well as to express. It works in the same manners for the women readers who undergoes with the same suffering and same state of mind. As David Perkins also says:

“At present time the finest poetry by feminist is likely to be in the confessional style, Confessional poetry by women is of absorbing interest to feminist readers. Confessional poetry renders personal experience or emotions as it actually is, regardless of social conventions. Moreover confession poetry expresses truths and experiences so painful that most people would suppress them. If therefore, a woman resents her children, or feels victimized by a patriarchal society and revengeful towards it, The confession mode enables her to express such emotions directly, and, for readers, they have a documentary value. At this level the confession of
women’s experience reveals, at least as feminist readers interpret it, emotions that have persisted throughout history but have not hitherto been acknowledged. Once they are articulated, other women recognize them in themselves, and thus confessional poetry tends to promote psychological liberation, the liberation that comes in freely seeing and talking about what has previously been repressed. Moreover, in all such confession there is an additional revolutionary impulse.”(2)

Adrienne Rich is one of the noted figures of this genre in America and Kamala Das, a popular Indian poet. These two women responded in a similar way to similar themes. Rich is an American, educated and liberated. Kamala Das is a traditional Indian woman. Both represent their pent-up inner feelings of their hurt mental state in the confessional style. It is found to be a convenient form of expression for the two poets who are keenly sensitive to the delicates. This chapter is a comparative study of the poetry of Kamala Das with that of Adrienne Rich in relation to their confessional style of writing. It is an attempt to produce more genuine and more truthful appreciation of their work.
Subjectivity is the key note of confessional poetry. ‘I’ is present in almost of all the poems of confessional mode. There is no other person in the poems. ‘I’ in the poem is the poet and nobody else. They don’t talk about others and their feeling. Or if it happens that also with reference to the poet’s relation or anykind of intimacy with him. Their poems are highly emotional in tone and narrative in structure. Poet vividly talks about herself, her needs, her desires, her pain, her pleasures, her complaints. Hence the poems of Kamala Das and Adrienne Rich are subjective in nature. They talk in the first person voice which directly appeals the heart of readers. This first person voice we can hear in the poetry of Kamala Das when she confesses about her little knowledge about politics, religion, casticism in her poem “The first Meeting”

............... I never knew any

Politics, wielded no religion or

Caste to empower my claims; yes never

Feared calumny, poverty, pains or death

But the fatigue in your eyes unnerved me. (3)
In her another poem “Suicide” she expresses her helplessness. She is forced to live a superficial and artificial life. Though she wants to live simple still she has to show off what others wish not what she wishes. She painfully states:

    I must Pose.

    I must pretend,

    I must act the role

    Of happy woman.

    Happy wife.

    I must keep the right distance

    Between me and the low.

    And I must keep the right distance,

    Between me and the high.

    O sea, I am fed up

    I want to be simple I

    want to be loved (4)
Kamala Das is not willing to lead such a meaningless life where she has to enact what she is not and this makes her miserable. She longs for true love, Love that exists between the legendary Radha and Krishna. She years for such a love that does not impede her impulse to freedom. In case she is not destined for fulfillment of her wish, then her preference would be to end her life. She confesses same in her poem ‘Suicide’:

\[
\text{If love is not to be had,} \\
\text{I want to be dead, just dead. (5)}
\]

It seems that her priority is set and she does not wish to compromise about it. But life is not as simple as it appears to be. Her search for true love worked like madness in her but it is like a mirage. The more you run atoward it more it go away from you and the result is disappointment, frustration and humiliation. A. N. Dwivedi studies the poetry of Kamala Das and expresses in his book “Kamala Das and her Poetry”-

\[
\text{There is too much of anguish and suffering in the verse of Kamala Das.} \\
\text{It colours her poetic body through and through. The adverse}
\]
circumstances have rendered her vision tragic and melancholy,— her upbringing by careless parents, her marriage with an egoistic and vain lories man, her disappointment in love and her illicit- affairs with other man in order to remove her boredom and anxiety. Added to this, she is very sensitive and unconventional woman, who is not prepared to dictated terms. Her dissatisfaction in marriage and life sharpened her consciousness, and she possibly decided to air out her grievances through the poetic medium, because many unpalatable things can be said in this medium without incurring the wrath of powerful persons.

Most of her poems deal with her interior life and subjective state. She writes of her private anguish in an effortless manner. In the poem “Too Early the Autumn Sights” she expresses her pain and anguish—
Too early the autumn sights

Have come, too soon my lips

Have lost their hunger, too soon

The singing birds have

Left. (7)

Poem “The conflagration” also highlights the poets’s silent suffering in the company of a cruel man. She asks herself-

Woman, is this happiness, this lying buried

Beneath a man? (8)

She vividly expresses her despair in the poem “The Freak”:

The heart

An empty cistern waiting

Through long hours, fills itself
With coiling snakes of silence....

I am a freak, It’s only

To save my face, I flaunt, at

Times, a grand, flamboyant lust. (9)

In the poem “Gino” in “Old Play House and other poems” she shares her experience of life that is deprived of joy and she lost all the hopes to get it. She writes:

This body that I wear without joy, this body

Burdened with lenience, slender toy, owned

By man of substance, shall perhaps wither, battling with

My darling’s impersonal lust. Or it shall grow gross

And reach large proportions before its end. (10)

In the Poem “The Wild Bougainvillea” she expresses her agony with the help of imagery-

............................... Day
When even my bed gave

No rest, but like a troubled sea, tossed me on

Its waves, and how I groaned

And moaned, and constantly yearned for a man from

Another town. (11)

Poem “Someone Else’s Song” presents her utter dissatisfaction with life and makes her personal voice, voice of every woman. It becomes universal voice. She says life for every woman is same aimless, hopeless:

I am a million, million deaths

Pox- clustered, each a drying seed

Someday to be shed, to grow for

Someone else, a memory. (12)
In the poem “The Snobs” she confesses that the smile which she wears is not natural but imposed. She accepts that women are a thing to use and throw. At one stage we start avoiding our mother because her hands are worn out with work, she is of no use now. It is the story of every generation:

What have I offer them but

My smile, a half-dead, fraudulent,

Thing, what have I to offer at

This shrine of peace, but my constant

Complaining voice? Forgive us. We

Are paltry creatures, utter snobs,

Who disowned our mothers only

Because their hands, we noticed, were

Work-worn... (13)

Poem “The Old Playhouse” expresses her plight of being misled and spoilt-
I came to you but to learn

What I was and by learning, to learn to grow, but every

Lesson you gave was about yourself. (14)

The poet does not hesitate to confess that she was cheated and exploited. She wants to explore herself but lost herself completely.

Adrienne Rich is the most significant confessional poet after Anne sexton and Sylvia Plath. She gathers the world into her account of private incident, feelings and problems of her life. Her life caused her pain and confusion. Her poetry is her life. She expressed her pain, confusion, inner turmoil and severe disappointment in her poetry. The Poem “The Key” in the volume “Leaflet” expresses her pain in following words-

How long I have gone round

And round, spiritless with foreknown defeat

In search of that glitter. (15)
In the poem “Trying to talk with a man” she confesses—

\[
\text{Out here I feel more helpless}
\]
\[
\text{With you than without you. } (16)
\]

Her pain reached to the extreme where it lost the reason behind it and only rolling tears left out. She writes in the poem “Merced”

\[
\text{I find myself in tears}
\]
\[
\text{Without knowing which thought}
\]
\[
\text{Forced water to my eyes. } (17)
\]

In the poem “Translation” she gives universal expression to her pathetic position in this world. She says that women are like an expensive show piece hung on the wall of drawing room.
We have trained like ivy to our walls
Baked it like bread in our ovens.
Worn it like lead on our ankles
Watched it through binoculars as if
It were helicopter
Bringing food to our female
Or the satellite
Of a hostile power. (18)

Rich expresses her dissatisfaction with her present life. She denies to call it life. In the Poem “Origin and History of Consciousness” she writes-

But I can’t call it life until we start to move
Beyond this secret circles of fire
Where our bodies are giant shadows flung on wall
Where the night becomes our inner darkness, and sleeps,
Like a dumb beast, head on her paws in the corner. (19)
Through her poetry Adrienne Rich tries to awake her own conscience and boost herself to make life useful through creativity. Even she tries to implant the seeds of awareness in the minds of reader who still lead aimless and stagnant life.

About Rich’s confessionalism David Perkins writes in his book “A history of Modern Poetry: Modernism and After-““A Richean emotional dialectic runs through her poetry. She internalizes the expectations of others, feels that she is not being herself, not leading her own life and rebels” (20)

The term ‘confessional’ overstresses the notion of the poem as instant communication. The poem itself is an act, a part of the life it describes. It creates an environment where the poet leads a life of struggle, improvisation and resistance. Personal experience includes the fantasies of the poet’s life inner life. Poetry absorbs the data of private events, fears and desires as well as materials of intimate confessional and historical imagination. Confessional poetry thus translates autobiographical facts into epic narratives. with a sense of anguish and despair Kamala Das says in, “Of Calcutta” that her people had sent her away to another city as;
A relative’s wife, a housfrau for his home,

and Doll for his parlour, a walkie talkie

one to Warm his bed at night.... ..

he folded Me each night in his arms

and told me of greater Pleasure that had come his way, rich harvest of

Lust, gleaned from other fields, not mine the embers died.

Within me then. (21)

She has thus, a strong grievance against her husband’s infidelity and lust.

Adrienne Rich, in an identical vein, in her poem “The Phenomenology of Anger” expresses a woman’s feeling of anguish about the hypocrisy of man, that leaves her shattered and lone:

I hate you,

I hate you the mask you wear, your eyes

Assuming a depth.

They do not posses, drawing me
Into the grotto of your skull

The landscape of bone

I hate your words

They make me think of fake

Revolutionary piles

Crisp imitation parchment

They sell at battle fields.

Confessional poetry is an expression of personality and never an escape from it. In this regard kamala Das and Adrienne Rich follow the Romantics and break with classical theory of impersonal nature of poetry. These poets do not obliterate their personalities in their poems: their lives seldom remain invisible in their works. They deliberately parade the details of their life in poetry. They reveal to the readers what a Christian reserves for the Father Confessor or a patient reserves for the analyst. In “Morning at Appollo Pier” Kamala Das expresses a woman’s yearning for unadulterated love:

....... But, hold me, hold me once again,
Kiss the words to death in my mouth, plunder

Memories. I hide my defeat in your

Wearing blood, and all my fears and shame.

You are the poem to end all poems

A Poem, absolute as the tomb. (23)

Her mood alternates between frenzy and pain, the need for love and the thought of death. In a state of subjective reality the poet equates love with death, compares a lover to a poem and finds in poetry an alternative to love making.

Rich celebrates her physical love with her lover in “Twenty One Love Poems XIV”:

Your touch on me, firm, protective, searching

Me out, your strong tongue and slender fingers

Reaching where I had been waiting years for you

In my rose-wet cave whatever happens, this is. (24)
The words ‘this is’ binds the sex act to the present, but it is an anomaly. The poem immortalizes the relationship of Rich and her lover, but it stands alone. The explicit description of sexual love shows the transgressive potential of the body in this poem. She is able to celebrate her sexuality with the shocking graphic nature of the poem.

Confessional poetry is woven around the poetic self as the chief symbol. The personal mythology which the poet creates has the poet as the focal point. The truth expressed by the poem is not literal but poetic. In the poetry of Kamla Das and Adrienne Rich the poetic self is at the centre stage of the events that finds expression in poetry. These poets find no hurdles between her self and the direct expression of that self despite the pain, anguish and difficulty involved in that kind of expression. The adoption of persona is not necessary for them to express their emotions. Their poetry is an expression of personality, one finds only subjective correlative corresponding to subjective confessions. Kamala Das describes her experience in “Annamalai Poems”:

There were nights when I heard

My own voice call me out
Of dreams, gifting such rude

Awakening, and then

Expelling me from warm

Human love, unaccustomed

Fare far one such as I,

A misfit when awake. (25)

The ‘I’ here, as well as the reference to “voice” could suggest the theme of the self and this isolated self covers an intricate path and ultimately becomes a movement in the direction of a larger quality.

The poet attributes her bitter personal experiences to the disorder of the so-called civilized world and its prejudices. The malaise thus created within flows out in the form of poetic confessions giving vent to the pent-up suffocative emotions which eventually bring about a relief in the poetic self. Poetry of Das and Rich is not a portrayal of the outer landscape; what is revealed is the vast, complex inner panorama and the existential pressure it confronts in its interactions with the outer worlds. There is always a conflict between within and without. The self seems to have a predilection to
withdraw into the shell of solitude fearing defeat. This sense of impending defeat finds expression in the following lines of “Anamalai Poems VII”

If someone would only remove the sun
From my way I would not have to face
Another sorrowful day but I would
Lie then in kind night’s embrace, soothed by its
Blinded compassion while it’s groping fingers
Would anaesthetize my private terror…..(26)

The same sense of losing herself and of her gradual decay is expressed by Rich in her poem “Moth Hour” published in her volume “Necessities of Life”-

I am gliding backward away from those who knew me
As the moon grows thinner and finally shuts its lantern.
I can be replaced a thousand times,

A box containing death.

When you put out your hand to touch me

You are already reaching toward an empty space.

(27)

Such lines emerge clearly from a self, defeated and fatigued by the external world of other. Whenever the poet touches upon the external world it is only to contrast it with her psychic demand emerging out of its yearning in the early childhood.

The impulse behind confessional poetry is the urge to see and know the truth about oneself, however painful and embarrassing it may be. The poet plunges into the unconscious, dives beneath the level of rational discourse, ransacks the darker side of the self with subliminal imagery and the logic association. The poet dramatizes the personal, explores the discovery of the external truth by the self, portrays the self’s reaction to this discovery and incorporates personal history into poems. Rich also speaks of the chronic loneliness she feels as an artist in a patriarchal society. She confesses in “Song”:
You’re wondering if I’m lonely:
OK then, yes, I’m lonely
as a plane rides lonely and level
on its radio beam, aiming
across the Rockies
for the blue-strung aisles
of an airfield on the ocean.

You want to ask, am I lonely?
Well, of course, lonely
as a woman driving across country
day after day, leaving behind
mile after mile
little towns she might have stopped
and lived and died in, lonely.(28)

She experiences the loneliness on a daily basis, but she does not see this
loneliness as a negative in her. She accepts the loneliness which she is
undergoing and compares it with airplane, flying across the rocks. The image
of a plane is used because it will ride lonely in an empty airspace with
nothing in sight for miles except for a rocky mountains.

If I’m lonely
it must be the loneliness
of waking first, of breathing
dawn's first cold breath on the city
of being the one awake
in a house wrapped in sleep (29)

Adrienne compares her loneliness with an object rather than another person or even with an animal that actually has feelings. The image of an inanimate object to explain loneliness works well in the readers’ mind.

If I’m lonely
it’s with the rowboat ice-fast on the shore
in the last red light of the year
that knows what it is, that knows it’s neither
ice nor mud nor winter light
but wood, with a gift for burning. (30)

She uses the situation to bring out the positive attitude within her. She says the plane might feel isolated and alone in the sky, but its mission combined with the magical atmosphere marks its incredible journey. The poet wants all the women must be firm in reaching their destination.

Kamala Das finds herself alone in such a big world and sometimes feels that she would lose herself. This loneliness was there with her from the beginning of her life. In childhood, when a person finds himself/herself most secure in
the lap of his/her mother or holding the finger of his/ her father one thinks that he is guided in a right direction and would never lose the path; she was the one who was alone. She writes in her poem “A Requiem for My Father”

_I was never afraid to die,_

_From childhood to middle years I have had a raw deal_

_Illness and loneliness, loves that faded like mist,_

_And the elders’ irrational hate._

But poetry provides her escape same as John Keats finds solace in his poetry and Lamb finds in his essays. Difference is that they live the life expected and wished in their work while kamala Das gives confesses it in her poetry and relieves her soul. Her poetry becomes the close companion as she expresses her feeling of loneliness and her gratitude to the poetry which soothes her burning heart as written in the third poem of “Anamalai Poems”-

_If I had not learnt to write how would_

_I have written away my loneliness_

_Or grief? Garnering them within my heart_

_Would have grown heavy as a vault, one that_
Only death might open, a release then

I would not be able to feel or sense....(32)

Confessional poets like Kamala Das and Adrienne Rich reveal all the layers of their psyche through their poems. Their poetry functions as a bridge between the reader and their soul which is suffering, which is traumatized. The souls that is terribly lonely despite everything all around it. This loneliness was a result of not getting the desired, unfulfilled wishes that led them to the state of alienation and they start wishing to meet their doom. They longs for death and sometimes convinced that it is the only solution for their suffering. In Kamala Das’ poetry one can find many illustrations of her suicidal attempt or her longing for death. In her poem “The Suicide”, she writes

O sea, I am fed up

I want to be simple

I want to be loved

And
If love is not to be had

I want to be dead, just dead. (33)

Here one can find that the yearning for true love, wish to be loved is the only thing that can bring her and keep her into life. And if, that is not there she just wish to quit. There is no charm and attraction in her life and death is the one she opts for.

In her another poem, “Death brings no loss” she boldly declares:

Each night when darkness twins

Me blind, I think of death,

Understanding it to

Be like night fall, just a

Temporary phase, which

Brings no loss. (34)

Here poet tries to explore the philosophy of death as she declares that it is not the finishing point, rather a new start- a new stream of life gets its origin from it.
Kamala Das seems so observed with the thought of death that any abstract thing reminds of death. In the poem “My morning Tree”, she shares with reader:

\[ \text{Morning tree, on your brown bony branch, one day} \]
\[ \text{I shall see a sudden flower and know at once} \]
\[ \text{That my death is just a flower, a red, red} \]
\[ \text{Morning flower, and then from behind the cold} \]
\[ \text{Window pane, I shall smile my lost morning smile. (35)} \]

Confession is all about the outcome of paradoxical thoughts. This is vividly expressed when Kamala Das herself confronts the idea of death and conclude that it is not the ultimate solution, it’s not a brave act to attempt. In her poem, “Death is so mediocre”, she write

\[ \text{.......... Death is} \]
\[ \text{So mediocre, any fool can achieve} \]
\[ \text{It effortlessly. (36)} \]
Kamala Das’ poetry expresses a central conflict between life and death. But she resolved this conflict by choosing life over death.

Unlike Kamala Das, Adrienne Rich does not plunge into the thought of ‘Death’. She just hates the idea of death or suicide. She believes in making things better, life is to live and do some fruitful. She writes in her poem ‘The Phenomenology of Anger’

_Madness, Suicide, Murder._

_Is there no way out but these? (37)_

Rich always looks to find a way to run life as it’s a precious gift and death is not a ultimate solution of anything. Death takes away all the possibilities to get a solution and to live life and enjoy it. She quotes the example of great people who sacrificed their life to make people learn the language of love, sympathy and kindness. She talks about them gets herself filled with life, with a new ray of hope and she declares that life is only way to choose and follow. She writes in her poem ‘Merced’:

_I think of Norman Morrison_

_The Buddhists of Saigon_
The black teacher last week

Who put himself to death

To waken guilt in hearts

Too numb to get the message

In a world masculinity made

Unfit for women or men

Taking off in a plane

I look down at the city

Which meant life to me, not death....(38)

These lines show a strong affirmation of life. She thinks that human beings are not born to hate, to have guilt or to repent. She wants that human’s mind should be channelized in such a way that it fails to feel rage, guilt or hate.

Confessional poetry is all about frankness. Poet talks on the personal matters without any inhibitions. The frustration in married life and relation between husband and wife are got expression in the work of confessional poets. To
intensify they more often take support of symbols and imagery. As Kamala
Das writes in her poem ‘The Stone Age’,

\[\begin{align*}
&Fond \ husband, \ ancient \ settler \ in \ the \ mind \\
&Old \ fat \ spider, \ weaving \ webs \ of \ bewilderment, \\
&Be \ kind. \ You \ turn \ me \ into \ a \ bird \ of \ stone, \ a \ granite \\
&Dove, \ you \ build \ around \ me \ a \ shabby \ drawing \ room, \\
&And \ stroke \ my \ pitted \ face \ absent \ mindedly \ while \\
&You \ read. (39)
\end{align*}\]

In this poem, husband is portrayed as “old fat spider” that weaves “webs of
bewilderment” around her and constructing the dead, dull stony wall of
domesticity and thus turning her into “a bird of stone, a granite dove”.

Further she frankly admits that her husband only needs physical pleasure,
never tries to touch soul. She boldly gives the picture of their relations in her
poem “The Stone Age”

\[\begin{align*}
&\ldots\ldots.Ask \ me, \ everybody, \ ask \ me \\
&What \ he \ sees \ in \ me, \ ask \ me \ why \ he \ is \ called \ a \ lion,
\end{align*}\]
A Libertine, ask me the flavour of his

Mouth, ask me why his hands sways like a hooded snake

Before it clasps my pubis. Ask me why like

A great tree, filled, he stumps against my breasts,

And sleeps. Ask me why life is short and love is

Shorter still, ask me what bliss and what its price. (40)

Adrinne Rich shares same kind of cold relationship with her husband and does not shirk to confess that for him she is not a human being but a show piece to be kept in drawing room. In her poem ‘Translation’ she presents a picture of every woman or every wife’s psyche,

We have trained it like ivy to our walls

Bakes it like bread in over ovens

Worn it like lead on our ankles

Watched it through binoculars as if
It were helicopters

Bringing food to our femine

Or the satellite

Of a hostile power.(41)

Here it is used for inner self of a woman that has lost her own identity. Husband is depicted as a hostile power. Rich confesses that in this patriarchal society woman as an individual is completely lost. As a parsona she has turned dwarf. She is functioning as a bonsai to decorate the house or to please everyone.

Confessional poetry is all about its frank expression in its bare for whether it is about the hollowness of their life, their adulterous relationship or lesbian relationship. In her poems ‘Introduction’, ‘grandmother’s House’ and ‘Substitute’ Kamala Das talks about her love relations outside wedding Lock. In ‘Phenomenology Of Anger’ and ‘Twenty one Love Poems’ Of Adrienne Rich presents her liking for women. She confesses that true love can be achieved only in company of other. ‘Twenty one Love Poems’ celebrats her lesbian love. She wishes to free herself any kind of feeling which makes her dependent on man. Through their poetry they present the truth in bare form. It
produces cathartic effect on their own psyche as well as readers. It gives outlet to old suffering and unbearable pain and anguish. Confessional poetry by kamala Das and Adrienne Rich is an effort to illuminate the universal quest for a favorable resolution of human guilt. They connect their individual problems with general experiences, their own self gain aesthetic distance over their private anxieties and attain a clear insight about the general character of all human experience. Their poetry represents not a revelation of the external or factual, but of the internal and imaginative.
References:

1. Harmon Willium: A handboo to literature, Page 119


4. Kamala Das: OnlySoul Knows How to Sing, Op-cit, Page108

5. Kamala Das: OnlySoul Knows How to Sing, Op-cit, Page108
6. A.N. Dwivedi: Kamala Das and Her Poetry, Atlantic Publisher & Distributers, 1983, Page 41-42


11. Kamala Das: Summer in Calcutta, Op-cit, Page 14

12. Kamala Das: Summer in Calcutta, Op-cit, Page 31


14. Kamala Das: Old Play House and Other Poems, , Page 1


23. Kamala Das: Only Soul Knows How to Sing, Op-cit, Page 40


25. Kamala Das: Only Soul Knows How to Sing, Op-cit, Page 136

26. Kamala Das: Only Soul Knows How to Sing, Op-cit, Page 138


31. Kamala Das: Only Soul Knows How to Sing, Op-cit, Page 143

32. Kamala Das: Only Soul Knows How to Sing, Op-cit, Page 136-137

33. Kamala Das: Only Soul Knows How to Sing, Op-cit, Page 107

34. Kamala Das: Summer in Calcutta, Op-cit, Page 64

35. Kamala Das: Summer in Calcutta, Op-cit, Page 47
36. Kamala Das: Only Soul Knows How to Sing, Op-cit, Page 64


39. Kamala Das: Only Soul Knows How to Sing, Op-cit, Page 82

Kamala Das: Only Soul Knows How to Sing, Op-cit, Page 8