INTRODUCTION
Spivak maintains "is not only who is speaking and how is she speaking, but to whom is she speaking and on behalf of whom she is speaking. (1996:6)." In her studied observation, Spivak opens up the complexity of a discourse towards which most feminist oriented creative writers endeavoured to work. Besides identity and autonomy of selfhood, women writers claiming to belong to a tradition of their own, articulate other challenges, while writing back to patriarchy. They also attempt to deconstruct the assumptions of patriarchy's monolithic structure considered axiomatic or universal. While asserting autonomy of selfhood, on the one hand, they attempt in various ways to speak about their gender, desire and sexuality. The theme of love and relationships; man-woman, mother-child are variously problematised, in that, a discourse of resistance is articulated.

Some women writers declare that language must be shattered because language is supposed to be male as it is a conveyor of among other things, male chauvinism. They claim for themselves 'another language', that in its new form, would be closer to woman's lived experience, an experience in the centre of which the body is frequently located. Hence the watch words 'liberate-the-body' and 'speak-the-body' are in use. While at one level it is legitimate to expose the
oppressions, the mutilations, the objectification of the female body, another level, it subverts the individuation of the feminine identity. Furthermore, the themes of otherness and of the body merge together, because the most visible difference between man and woman is indeed the difference in biology. To advocate a direct relation to the body is therefore not subversive because it is equivalent to denying the reality and the strength of social mediations. The feminine discourse is articulated in different modes taking into account the experiencing-self that moves between a pre-linguistic idealisation of the body to a symbolic level of self-actualisation.

Emerging out of such a ferment, the articulated subject position of a woman writer gives voice to her suppressed emotions and unbind herself from patriarchal bondage in both literary and social articulation. Kamala Das and Judith Wright are such voices, who among the post colonial women poets, express their inner worlds and address in a self reflexive manner some of the important issues of feminism. Well known for their confessional mode of expression, honest and frank views on man-woman relationship, and unconventional approaches to some of the burning issues of the day, Kamala Das and Judith Wright are imbued with a typically feminine sensibility. Although both Judith Wright and Kamala Das were born in two different parts of the world in divergent societies, a common strain of feminism is conspicuous and all
pervading in their poetry. While the body is a central metaphor in Kamala Das's poetry, it is not the same with Judith Wright. However, as creative writers they are acutely alert to question of identity and selfhood. A close examination of their works reveal that the body in its physical and spiritual manifestations variously foreground their creative endeavours.

Born in 1915 at Wallalumbi in New South Wales, Australia, Judith Wright had poems published in children's papers from the age of ten. No recent Australian poet has won wider appreciation and critical regard than Judith Wright. A small number of her poems inevitably recur in anthologies because they are by common consent her best, and are among the finest poems we have. Her first volume, The Moving Image (1946) was an immediate success. In these poems, Judith Wright set about her life's long quest to define Australia as a land, a nation and a metaphysical entity, in language that showed awareness of contemporary overseas writing in English but also recognised the unique environment and society of Australia. The young poet of The Moving Image was no amateur: she had at least twenty years of apprenticeship to poetry behind her. The epigraph to the volume quoted is from Plato that 'Time is a moving image of eternity'. The epigraph conforms to Judith Wright's sense of celestial time never suiting to the
human rhythm. The sense that 'both time and fear' are a creation of the poet, who must resist both, otherwise she will cease to exist. Despite the oppressiveness of time and death; life and desire are to be found in nature, visionary madness and love. This great metaphysical vision is what the poet puts before herself as a manifesto and a programme to give expression to her creative urge. She realizes that she is a maker, the maker not only as poet, but the maker of time and fear which are the material out of which poetry is to be made. *The Moving Image* is the beginning of many roads along which the poetry of Judith Wright proceeds, but it is also the bringing together in one place, and in one personality formed by and fitted to that place, of many strains of thought.

*Woman to Man* (1949), Judith Wright's next book of poems is a stronger and more profound work, though it breaks no new ground. The majority of the poems in this volume are openly metaphysical where before they were mainly so by implication. In particular, many of them are devoted to those experiences of love and love-making from the woman's point of view on which so few women have commented in poetry. Most of them have written much on love, but not on making of love. And as is natural for a woman, not only the act and the passion, but its outcome, the conception, the gestation,
the birth and nurturing of a child, are the subjects of Judith Wright’s meditation. The aspects of the world to which she gives an articulate voice bears upon her identity as a woman poet. Love and procreation are seen as profound mysteries, shaded by the thought of death. They are expressible in complementaries and antimonies: the foetus, for instance, is to its parents ‘our hunter and our chase’, ‘the maker and the made’, ‘the question and reply’; in its birth it ‘shall escape and not escape’.

In her first two volumes, Judith Wright enunciates the three chief concerns of her work. The first is the nature of time, the motion of flux or change, and the resoluteness that the poet must conjure, mostly through love, to defeat her fear of time. The second is the attempt to resolve into a harmony or a creative paradox, the basic antimonies of human existence - man and his environment, past and present, soul and flesh. The third is the Australian landscape and its appropriate expression and sublimation in language.

Judith Wright’s next volume The Gateway published in 1953 seems to be a continuation of the themes dealt with in Woman to Man. Some poems in this volume introduces a new strain to her argument about life and death. It seems to depend on a Jungian sense (perhaps a Buddhist sense) of the dissolution of the self...
The collective unconscious is the abode of both life and death, for from it emanates 'the bright smoke' that is 'the flowing and furious world'. In fact from this point on in Judith Wright's poetry there are moments when the poet seems to lose her certainty, her sureness of touch, her instinct for the right phrase. *The Two Fires* (1955), her next volume contains a number of poems, including the title poem, written at the time of the Korean war, when the world's destruction by atomic warfare seemed distinctly possible. The lyrics in this volume have a different movement and tone from the earlier ones forged into a more subtle and meditative rhythm. Another path explored in this volume and to be followed in her later poems is the one, too rarely tried, of amused and delightful irony. In the poems of her next volume *Birds* (1962), most of the earlier bardic qualities give way to a personal and intimate delight in the creatures of nature she describes - sometimes describing them in anthropomorphic terms. The poems in *Birds*, however, are vivid and accurate in detail, having an element of simple humour since a number of them were apparently written for the entertainment of a child. All the individual poems in the volume are on the one theme and contribute to common effect. *Five Senses* (1963) is a retrospective selection, with many new poems. The more relaxed, personal mood continues, through the old images of light, bone and depths, so does the emphasis on time's flux, death and fear. The poems appear to bear a metaphysical strain where the old crystal vision is replaced by dark surmise and a hesitation between aspects of the world beyond the senses which are ambiguous or contradictory. Judith Wright's quest for illumination which
seemed a kind of inspired innocence, is now in the world of experience aware of the growth of a new consciousness within her, an alien and baffling vision. In *The Other Half* (1966), Judith Wright appears to be formulating a new and uncompromising theory of creation as something willed and controlled from beyond the individual mind. The two halves are the conscious and the unconscious personalities, the one that 'undrowns' when she is asleep and the other that conducts the business of daily life. It is a psychological concept which partly replaces the mystical and metaphysical principles that inspired the earlier volumes - and again it seems to be continuous with them. This volume is full of hints that figure a movement away from poetry as a consciously practiced art, a deliberate attempt to capture the beauty of the world by an effort of the will, a deliberate attempt to localize the meaning of life in the ship and crew on the ocean of eternity, instead of the ocean itself which alone gives the temporal meaning.

Judith Wright's poetry certainly arises from personal experience; but the personal experience is not as a rule the theme, rather it is the accidental means to a theme which is typically general - concerned with the human condition, with what it is like to be subject to time and change having and losing, knowing and feeling, in a world which never ceases to be strange though familiar. What also strikes one is that, though there are positives and negatives within this personal experience - unresolved conflicts in the signals that come from the outer world - there is very little interior conflict. The whole person of the poet seems to
react integrally to each situation or problem: the self is not a divided one, and the poet has had little need for the ironies and ambiguities or dramatizations that many modern poets have required.

The feminine and mystical charm is very explicit in the poetry of Judith Wright. However, she is at her best in giving expression to issues that directly concern the woman. The quest for identity attains a metaphysical significance. And Judith Wright is able to reconcile the mystical and metaphysical strains from a feminine perspective. It only needs a slight acquaintance with her poetry to discover the latent feminism intertwined with nature which is meditative, intuitive emotional with strong metaphysical searching. Even in her love poems, Judith Wright rarely meddles with physical description or with the physical details of love making, even on a symbolic or metaphorical level. The whole visible sensible world partakes in the mystery of gestation and birth when the poet as a woman takes them into her mind, in a poem like 'The Maker', as into a womb in which they grow another nature and are finally born into poetry. Some poems of Judith Wright are beautifully sexual but it is the sexuality of the whole mystery of reproduction, felt as one process and directed to one end. And it is presented not notionally or intellectually, but as a matter of direct experience, having a strong participatory insight.

Kamala Das's poetry seems to function at a level far removed from larger realities of life yielding place to the constricted world of a cloistered self.
Her obsession with love, or more appropriately with intimacy, which critics without exception have identified as the most prominent feature of her poetry, is often described as evidence of an ahistorical temper. Indeed, occasionally the poet allows herself to be contrived into such a mould by writing essays and reminiscences that promote ahistorical readings of her poetry. The very nature of her verse reflects her emotional temper, which makes her feel ill at ease with the present day materialistic world trying to lay a seige around her. Kamala Das's concerns as a poet are not philosophical or mystical or spiritual; they are also not directed towards the propagation of a commitment or the formulation of a theory of poetry. In fact, she is dedicated to the celebration of love in all its manifestations.

Kamala Das was born in 1934 at Punnayurkulam in Kerala. She was born in the traditionally matrilineal community of Nairs. Her mother and grand uncle were poets of repute in Malayalam. Thus Kamala Das was nurtured in an atmosphere of poetry. She began to write both in Malayalam and English. In 1969 she received the Kerala Sahitya Academy Award for her collection of Malayalam short stories Thanuppu (Cold). The recognition of Kamala Das as an Indian poet in English came when she won the PEN 's Asian Poetry Prize in 1963. Her poetic output in English is rather thin. It consists merely of three slender volumes, Summer in Calcutta (1965), The Descendants (1967), and The Old Playhouse and Other Poems (1973). The last volume includes many of the poems published
in the earlier volumes. Still she has made her mark and is universally acknowledged as one of the greatest of Indian poets writing in English. Kamala Das had the courage to express her essentially feminine sensibility, honestly and sincerely without any reservations or inhibitions. Concentration entirely on one theme gives her poetry the power, the intensity and the urgency that has cast its spell on all her readers.

*Summer in Calcutta* (1965), the first published anthology of Kamala Das's poetry sets the tone for her entire poetic output. It contains only fifty poems and with few exceptions the theme of all of them is love, or failure in love. Kamala Das lived in Calcutta for several years during her childhood and after her marriage. The poems in the volume are not about Calcutta but they arise from the poet's agonised response to the external world of traumatic experiences of her childhood and early married life. They suggest the poet's conscientious involvement in the panorama of life around her and a larger vision than what the immediate sensory perceptions could provide. They are a response to the intense summer heat of experiences presented to the poet by the medley of life that throbbed under the Calcutta sky. The rude summer of her life crept into every line she wrote. Kamala Das notes in her autobiography that Calcutta's vast human complex provided her with most of her poetic resources at this time. Calcutta was also the city where childhood, adolescence and adulthood merged in a continuous present. It also
taught her, or so she claims, to doubt human nature. But she drew inspiration
from the life of the city which she did not like:

Yet Calcutta gifted me with beautiful sights which built for me the sad poems that I used to write in my diary in those days.
It was at Calcutta that I saw for the first time the eunuchs’ dance.
It was at Calcutta that I first saw a prostitute, gaudily painted like a cheap bazaar toy. It was at Calcutta that I saw the ox-carts moving along the Strand Road early in the morning with proud heavy turbaned men, their tattooed wives with fat babies dozing at their breasts like old drunkards in clubs at lonely hour. (1976:157)

In this volume we come across a world which is harsh, sun-scorched, tropical, heavy with the smell of rotting garbage and death, where even the men have limbs like ‘carnivorous plants’. The lanes are ‘fevered’, the trees dusty and leafless, cheeks sunstained. Only the hardy marigolds and bougainvillea survive, and courtesans with ‘tinsel and jasmine in their hair’. Against a background of this fraught landscape, on to which the poet projects so much of her inner sense of dirt and sexual disgust, Kamala Das plays out her roles of unhappy woman, unhappy wife, mistress to young men, mother, reluctant nymphomaniac, pining for the joys of innocence and childhood which have been lost.

The Descendants, published in 1967, is Kamala Das’s second volume which is considerably slimmer than the first. Nine poems in this volume are extremely short and two are among the longest poems ever
written by her. The themes of love, lust and disillusionment constitute the leading motif in these poems. Whereas her first volume was more diffuse in scope, the second volume’s focus narrows down on the poet herself. The external world is still present in her poetry, but it is subdued by her inner moods for the most part and lacks the flamboyant abundance of *Summer in Calcutta*. Most poems in *The Descendants* show a metaphysical concern with time, death and decay.

A preoccupation with loneliness and a corroding sense of futility mar some of these poems. The incongruity between man’s guiding desire and the insubstantiality of his achievements strikes the poet lending him vision of human destiny a tragic dimension. Most of the lyrics in this volume are further variations on the theme of love, and are pessimistic even death-conscious in tone. Kamala Das’s personal frustrations and sense of loneliness are always there; imparting to the poems a rar intensity and immediacy of appeal. Her courage to stand against the odds and express herself fully and frankly has deepened her faith in life whereby she has acquired a vision that typically smells of the native soil and heritage. *The Descendants* reveals the thematic and symbolic structure of Kamala Das’s poetic consciousness moulded by meditation over death and physical decay, ugliness of the body and the mind, and the fallibility of human emotions. Here, Kamala Das, the woman and Kamala Das, the artist, become one and the person
experience is universalised. *The Descendants* certainly displays greater artistic maturity and control.

Kamala Das’s third volume of verse, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems* appeared in 1973. The volume contains thirty three poems in all of which twenty have been taken from the two previous volumes. In this book there are no radical shifts in tone, no obtrusive breaks made with the essential themes and approaches of the first two.

It combines the essence of both volumes, the uninhibited abandon and enthusiasm for life seen in *Summer in Calcutta*, and the shadow of death, suicide, disease and old age found in *The Descendants*. The thirteen new poems in this volume reveal some new facets and a further artistic maturity. The love-theme is still there, but an entirely new dimension, a new intensity are added to its treatment. Kamala Das’s concern continues to be the exploration of the nature of love, lust and frustration. Yet another concern is her involvement with the deeper meaning of life and death, disease and decay. The poems have a more disciplined structure and poet has proved more effective in the organisation of materials and controlled expression. But many of the new poems suggest that the experiences incorporated swept her along till they destroyed her inner resources. What appeals to and disturbs us, is...
seeming inability of the poet to learn from experience, to withdraw
and show restraint.

Kamala Das is primarily a poet of feminine longings. Her
poetry reflect her restlessness as a sensitive woman moving in the male-
dominated society and in them she appears as a champion of woman’s
cause. Her experiences were limited, so also her range. But like Jane
Austen, she recognised the limitations of her range and achieved
excellence by working on her “three inches of ivory”. Quest for love,
as the central theme of Kamala Das’s poetry. Her greatness as a love
poet arises from the fact that her love-poetry is rooted in her own
personal experiences. It is an outpouring of her own loneliness,
isillusionment and sense of frustration. Her love-poetry is
unconventional and shocking to the orthodox, for her treatment of
sexual love and the human body is free, frank and uninhibited. Thus
the conflict between passivity and rebellion against the male-oriented
universe emerges as a major theme in her poetry. But Kamala Das
never tries to escape from harsh reality. Courage and honesty are the
strength of her character and her poetry. Though there is a lurking
social consciousness in her poems, she generally shies away from
explicit social themes. She has not been fully aware of the social
maladies around her but has also reacted emotionally to social injustice,
cruelty of the rich and the inequality and poverty among the poor.
Kamala Das is not committed to any ideology in her poetry; but she is committed to humanism and love. Kamala Das follows the confessional mode in her poems. The painful assertion, “I too call myself I” comes from the predicament of a confessional poet. The moods of a confessional poet are diverse and constantly shifting. One of the longer poems of Kamala Das, “Composition”, embraces such diverse moods as passionate attachment, agonising guilt and inhuman bitterness. She does not attempt to idealize or glorify any part of the self. Kamala Das’s poems reveal her restlessness as a sensitive woman moving in the male-dominated society and in them she appears as a champion of woman’s cause. In some of her poems the emphasis is largely on sexual love and female organs. Feminine sensibility, in the real sense of the term implies stress on emotional bond and an attitude which Kamala Das explores very realistically in other poems. In “The Music Party”, the aroma of feminism is obviously reflected in the poet’s silent eyes which are not brave and cannot look into the man’s eyes to prompt a response. Kamala Das reveals her typical feminine persona by being love-lorn without a word to say. Instances are various to illustrate her feminine sensibility, particularly in those poems which she writes in the garb of Radha waiting for Krishna to redeem herself through love. Going through her poetry never do we
miss the central concern of Kamala Das which is characterised by a typical feminine awareness.

In the light of the above discussion, the present study proposes to explore, in the poems of Kamala Das and of Judith Wright, the articulation of feminine sensibility while taking into account their similarities and differences, as women, as poets and as feminists.

Works Cited


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