I had an interview with Smt. Sugathakumari on 28th Jan 2014, in her office at Athani, Thiruvananthapuram. The excerpts from the interview are given below.

Q. Teacher, do you think your initiative in the Silent Valley struggle was an accident?

Sugathakumari : No, I grew up in an environment that made me believe that nature is an integral part of our life, that should be protected. True, I was an introvert until then going on with my personal literary fascinations. But Silent Valley, kindled the spirit of love for Nature in me, in a practical form. Moreover, I am very happy to say, it is the first struggle in the world, where writers of a vernacular region joined hands together for the cause of Nature. I am very proud about this aspect of Silent Valley activism, the literary aspect of it and the proof it gave, that the ‘Pen’ can save the earth from an impending disaster.

Q. But your writer comrades in the struggle- they all diverted to different fields, after it.
No, you should not take it in that way. They are there, strengthening me emotionally. They may not be activists like me but they are there with me.

It seems you adopt an independent stand in your struggles. Had you been able to take sides with political parties, your activism would have been more effective could you comment on that?

It is a wrong assumption All political parties have their own agendas. If I plan to work on their platform, I can never be honest to my passion.

In spite of all your relevant activism, God own Country is facing so many ecological hazards. What do you say about it?

Who needs all these things? People, you and me all like to take the present for granted. Why think about tomorrows? What do you teach your children? Study well, get a high profile placement and then migrate to a foreign country. Even if you live here, amassing wealth should be your primary concern. Nothing else. Here in Kerala we have, by God's and Nature’s grace we have two monsoons that replenish our rivers. Still we face drinking water scarcity. We have made much technological advancement. No technology can make drinking water. We concrete even the walk ways, and prevent filtration of rainwater. And then pray to god to send rains. See the
paradox in it. If you go on like this Kerala will be a desert in another
ten years.

Q. You have a firsthand experience of being an activist for tribal justice. Where is their place in development?

Sk: (Gets angry) Development? For whom? Governments propose so many projects for their welfare. The poor people are robbed of even their immediate resources. The middlemen take advantage of their ignorance. Leave them their immediate environment or they will perish.

Q. You criticize development. Can we return to that pre-historic past?

Sk: No, I never meant that. You should learn to differentiate between need and greed. We need facilities not luxuries. If you think in this way, you will get my stand.

Q. There is a section of your poetry devoted to the mythical Radha. You sing, there is a Radha in every woman. Who is this Radha? A cult figure from Hinduism?

Sk: Radha as I have said, is every woman. She is an extension of Nature who wants to be embraced in all her fullness.

Q. There are not many writer-activists these days?
Sk: People want to live in the present. You see you are safe. Open your eyes wide see the ecological hazards taking place all around you. I am not worried about the outcome of it. I am there for my insights.
Appendix II

Primary Sources (Title Translations)

Kamala Das

*Mathilukal* (1955) - Walls

*Tharissunilam* (1962) - Barrel Land

*Pakshiyude Manam* (1964) - The Bird’s Smell

*Thanuppu* (1967) - Cold

*Rajavinte Premabhajanam* (1969) - The King’s Beloved

*Kadal Mayooram* (1989) - The Sea Peacock

*Diarykkurippukal* (1992) - Diary Entries

*Ennennum Thara* (1994) - Always Thara

*Januamma Paranja Katha* (2002) - The Story Januamma Told


Sugathakumari

Non-fiction Essays

*Kavu Theendalle* (1993) -- Don’t Spoil the Sacred Groves

*Kadinu Kaval* (2012) -- Guarding the Forest

*Megham vannu Thottappol* (2010) -- When the Cloud Descended to Touch

*Variyellu* (2010) -- The Rib

Poetry Collections

*Kudathile Kadal* (2012) -- The Sea Inside the Pot
Irulchirakukal (2010) -- Wings of Darkness
Devadasi (1998) -- The Lord’s Slave
Muthuchippi (1961) -- The Seashell
Swapnabhoomi (1965) -- Dreamland
Pavum Manavahridayam (1967) -- The Poor Human Heart
Pathirappookkal (1968) -- Flowers of Midnight
Rathrimazha (1977) -- Night Rain
Ambalamani (1981) -- The Temple Bell
Kurinjippookkal (1987) -- Flowers of Kurinji
Thulavarshappacha (1990) -- The Lushness of the Month of Thulam
Radhayevide (1995) -- Where is Radha?
Krishnakavithakal (1996) -- Krishna Poems
Manalezhuthu (2006) -- Writing on the Sand
Vazhathen (1984) -- The Nectar of Plantain
Oru Kulappoovum Koodi (1998) -- One More Bunch of Flowers
Kudathile Kadal (2012) -- The Sea inside the Pot
Sugathakumariyude -- The Complete Poems of Sugathakumari
Kavithakal Sampoornam (2011)