

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE POEMS OF
KAMALA DAS AND FOROUGH FARROKHZAD**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
BHARATI VIDYAPEETH UNIVERSITY, PUNE
FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN ENGLISH
UNDER THE FACULTY OF ARTS**

**BY
MS. ANGELA SADEGHI TEHRANI**

**UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF
Dr.P.F.PATIL
FORMER PRINCIPAL
KAVERI COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND COMMERCE, PUNE**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
YASHWANTRAO MOHITE COLLEGE, PUNE - 38
BHARATI VIDYAPEETH UNIVERSITY, PUNE - 30
INDIA**

MARCH 2014

CERTIFICATE OF THE GUIDE

CERTIFIED that the work incorporated in the thesis “**A Comparative Study of the Poems of Kamala Das and Forough Farrokhzad**” submitted by **Ms. Angela Sadeghi Tehrani** was carried out by the candidate under my guidance. Such material as has been obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged in the thesis.

Date:

Dr.Pitambr Fakira Patil

Place: Pune

Research Guide

DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

I declare that the thesis entitled “**A Comparative Study of the Poems of Kamala Das and Forough Farrokhzad**” submitted by me for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is the record of work carried out by me during the period from May 2009 to October 2013 under the guidance of Dr.Pitambar Fakira Patil and has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship, titles in this or any other University or other institution of Higher learning.

I further declare that the material obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged in the thesis.

Date:

Angela Sadeghi Tehrani

Place: Pune

Research Student

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It took me well over three years to write this thesis and much of the delight of writing it came from the collaborative efforts of family, friends, and the university I studied in it. To all of them, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks.

Primarily and especially, to my very dear guide, Dr.P.F.Patil whom his endless support and generosity gave me the opportunity to think freely for my research. His endless motivation and encouragement inspired me so much. He has been a real mentor for me. I would also like to thank the members of the research committee, Dr.S.B.Gokhale, Dr.M.Mathkari, Dr.S.Chindhade, Dr.V.A.Rankhambe for their brilliant comments and suggestions. My hearty thanks to Dr.R.S.Zirange, Head of the Department of English for his kind attention to the progress of my research. I am grateful to Prof.Chikmat who introduced Indian English Poetry to me; I learnt a lot from him and his nice lectures. I also like to thank the PhD section officer, Dr.Suresh Suryawanshi for all of his earnest and sincere cooperation during these years. I am also thankful to Hon.Prin.K.D.Jadhav in Yashwantrao Mohite College for his support during my research. Thanks to Dr.P.M.Bulakh, Director, Board of College and University Development for his kind official helps.

I would like to express my heartily gratitude to Dr.Farzaneh Milani, Head of the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures at the University

of Virginia for her very precious favour to send her books to me and to Syracuse University Press, New York to grant me to use them.

I would also like to thank all my friends who supported me to strive towards my goal, Babak Bardia, Ghazaleh Jaber, Nima Mirzai, Mojgan Aalipour, Arkhawan Fattah, Ahmad Mohammed, Younes Salih, and Zeyad Ayed; particularly to Dr.Omid Ghahreman and my cousin, Sahar Rezvani for providing valuable sources.

A special thanks to my family. Words cannot express how grateful I am to my family-in-law not to let my husband alone in Iran during my absence and to my dear parents and brother for their emotional support and prayer, which sustained me thus far. I would like to express appreciation to my beloved husband Amir who tolerated this farness and was always my support in the tough moments. He helped me like an assistant and pushed me forward patiently; without his love, this task was impossible.

At the end, I owe thanks to two people who taught me a lot, Mrs. Fouzieh Kiani, my teacher in the first grade of elementary school and Mrs.Zahra Shokri, my Persian Literature teacher in the high school, the presence of these two dears was a milestone in my educational life.

March 01, 2014

Angela Sadeghi Tehrani

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Certificates	ii - iii
Declaration	iv
Acknowledgement	v - vi
Chapter I	1 - 26
<i>Introduction</i>	
1.1. Hypothesis	
1.2. Scope and Limitations of the Study	
1.3. Aims and Objectives of the Study	
1.4. Methodology	
1.5. Significance of the Study	
1.6. Review of Literature	
1.6.1. Related Studies	
1.6.2. Related Concepts and Terms	
1.6.1.i. Criticism	
1.6.2.ii. Comparative Literature	
1.6.2.iii. Confessional Poetry	
1.6.2.iv. Modernism	
Chapter II	27 - 47
<i>Theoretical Framework</i>	
2.1. Foreword: What Is Comparative Literature?	
2.2. Appearance to Development of the Term - Comparative Literature	

2.3. Afterword and Summing Up

Chapter III

48 - 115

An Outlook of Contemporary Persian Poetry and Thematic Analysis of Forough Farrokhzad's Poems

3.1. Modernist Poetry

3.2. The Tradition of Women's Writing in Contemporary Iran

3.3. Thematic Analysis of Forough Farrokhzad's Poems

Chapter IV

116 - 184

An Outlook of Contemporary Indian Poetry in English and Thematic Analysis of Kamala Das' Poems

4.1. Modern Indian Poetry in English

4.2. Women's Voices

4.3. Thematic Analysis of Kamala Das' Poems

Chapter V

185 - 274

Comparative Study of Different Aspects as Expressed in the Poems of Kamala Das and Forough Farrokhzad

5.1. Comparison

5.2. Contrast

Chapter VI

275 - 311

Conclusions

6.1. Main Findings in the Poems of Forough Farrokhzad

6.1.1. Summing Up

6.2. Main Findings in the Poems of Kamala Das

6.2.1. Summing Up

6.3. Similarities and Differences

6.3.1. Similarities

6.3.2. Differences

6.4. Epilogue

Appendix **312 -316**

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Secondary Sources

Web Source **317 -318**

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION



Chapter I

Introduction

Literature in Iran has always been used as a major medium of communication. This gesture also indicates the enormous popularity of classical poetry in Iran. In fact, until the end of the nineteenth century, poetry was the dominant literary form of expression. It was considered the greatest art of all. The most important figures of Iran's classical literature are poets such as Ferdowsi (940-1020 A.D.), Rumi (1207-1273 A.D.), Sa'di (1220-1290 A.D.), and Hafez (1320-1390 A.D.). Their works have been translated in all major languages.

The tradition of poetry in Iran has kept its importance in twentieth century through great poets such as Nima Yushij (1895-1960), Ahmad Shamlu (1926-2000), Mehdi Akhavan-e-Saleh (1928-1990), Sohrab Sepehri (1928-1980), and Forough Farrokhzad (1935-1967) who revolutionized traditional forms and founded Iran's modern poetry. However, since the end of nineteenth century, prose has acquired more attention. Authors such as Ali Akbar Dehkhoda (1879-1956), Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh (1892-1997), and later Sadegh Hedayat (1903-1951) contributed in forging a simple prose language, which could become accessible to ordinary people. This modern prose enabled short story writers and novelists to use literature to engage readers in socio-political issues of the society.

The 1979 Islamic Revolution was followed by a literary revolution. Although the combination of 'pure' literary values and political concerns continued their existence in the post-revolutionary literature, this period was marked by the desire to redefine oneself in that changed society. Indeed, this desire, or rather need, is a common outcome to any revolution but Iranians chose literature as one of the major vehicles of expressing this need. In a very short period of time a surprising number of novels and short stories were published. It is also noteworthy that women's involvement in literary production has increased to an unprecedented degree and their works represent a major aspect of the new identity of Persian literature. This new identity is a blend of traditional and modern trends, and its scope is determined by local and universal concerns.

Of late, the realistic, modernistic, pessimistic mode of the first three decades of post-independence writing has been giving way to a non-representational, experimental, self-conscious and optimistic literature. But the real challenge the writers of today face is the enforced homogenization and standardization of culture due to globalization and the new, easy and superficial internationalism which tempts Indian English writers to market themselves abroad.

Having said this, it also needs to be mentioned that there has been a movement to take Indian writing across the globe. Fictional writings and even representations of nature and characters in its best form by writers like Salman

Rushdie (1947), Vikram Seth (1952), Amitabh Ghosh (1956) have taken Indian writing and writers to great heights. These are efforts of several generations of Indian authors writing in English that have resulted in international success, particularly since the publication of *Midnight's Children* (1981) by Salman Rushdie. The Indian novel in English has finally been accepted as an important literary endeavour.

It could also be mentioned that Indian women writers have begun to gain recognition – thanks to Arundhati Roy(1961) winning the Booker Prize for *The God of Small Things* in 1997. Prior to the rise of the novel, many Indian women composed poetry and short stories in Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali, Urdu, Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada. Women were the chief upholders of a rich oral tradition of story-telling through myths, legends, songs and fables.

The major movement in post-independence Indian poetry in English has been modernism. Poets like Henry Derozio (1809-1831), Toru Dutt (1856-1877), Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949), and later Nissim Ezekiel (1924-2004) came up to their own time in an unbroken sequence.

They were the modernists who preferred to think of themselves as the inventors of new poetics, a new generation without literary ancestors. The 1950's and 1960's saw poets like Jayanta Mahapatra(1928), P. Lal(1929), A. K. Ramanujan(1929-1993), Kamala Das(1934-2009), K. N. Daruwalla(1937), Dom

Moraes(1938), and P. Nandy(1951) each having a style and craftsmanship of his/her own. The poets such as Dom Moraes and others frequently resorted to a variety of persons or masks behind to hide themselves; others like Jayanta Mahapatra have repeatedly explored both external and internal poverty and sorrow with remarkable persistence.

In spite of all those mentioned facts, traditional structure, moral and cultural values of the eastern societies like Iranian and Indian have figured the social positions of their women. Among these nations, there were intellectual women who struggled socially and culturally to inform their female counterparts.

Indian women for a long time had been encircled in the whirlpool of pain and suffering of orthodox society. The emergence of a large number of women poets is a significant feature of the Post-Independence Poetry. These Indian English women poets communicate a powerful female sensibility, which does not find expression in their male counterparts.

The history of Persian poetry has also been mostly documented with Iranian male poets, and a little attention has been paid to the poetesses who composed their poetry in Persian (Farsi) in different parts of the inspiring land of Iran.

Women poets write consciously as women. What distinguish their poetry are their confessional and autobiographical notes, frank, candid, bold, realistic, and honest expressions of their attitude to woman. Their themes are thwarted desires, the frustration of living in a male dominated world, sex and love, though

contemporary situations are finding more frequent mention in their poems; meanwhile, there were some poetesses like Forough Farrokhzad and Kamala Das who were looking for a rebirth.

This research which is a comparative study of Forough Farrokhzad and Kamala Das, the former Iranian and the latter Indian, emphasizes this fact that these two poetesses reached to honesty; certainly, honesty is the output of knowledge.

To be honest with herself, Forough Farrokhzad made uproar in the contemporary Persian poetry, alerts the stony slept women and men, and declares that woman is not a pet but a human being:

I have never wished

To be a star in the skies mirage

Or like the soul of the chosen ones

Be the silent companion of angels I have never been separate from earth

I have not been familiar with stars

I have stood on the earth

With my body like the stem of a plant

That sucks the wind, the water and sun

In order to live

Pregnant with desire

Fraught with pain

*I have stood on the earth
 So that stars might praise me
 And breezes might caress me ...¹*

(On the Earth, Book 4: Another Birth)

Kamala Das also has this honesty; she has her own vision, thought, attitude, and even her own language to express her feelings:

*Why not speak in
 Any language I like? The language I speak
 Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses
 All mine, mine alone. It is half-English, half-Indian,
 Funny perhaps, but it is honest,
 It is as human as I am human, don't
 You see? It voices my joys, my longings, my
 Hopes, and it is useful to me as cawing
 Is to crows or roaring to the lions, it
 Is human speech, the speech of the mind that is
 Here and not there, a mind that sees and hears and
 Is aware. Not the deaf, blind speech
 Of trees in storm or of monsoon clouds or of rain or the
 Incoherent mutterings of the blazing
 Funeral pyre ²*

(An Introduction: The Old Playhouse and Other Poems)

1.1. Hypothesis

The main hypothesis is that there are some similarities and differences in the poems of Forough Farrokhzad, the contemporary Iranian poetess and Kamala Das, the contemporary Indian poetess, so the researcher tries to bring out these similarities and differences.

1.2. Scope and Limitations of the Study

The scope of this research is poetry and its thematic analysis; therefore, among the contemporary post -colonial Indo - Anglian poets like Sarojini Naidu, Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan, etc, the researcher has chosen Kamala Das(1934 – 2009) and her poems, though she was also a short story writer, novelist, essayist, and memoirist. And on the other hand, among the contemporary modern Persian poets such as Nima Yushij, Ahmad Shamlou, Mehdi Akhavan-e-Saleh, etc., Forogh Farrokhzad (1935 – 1967) and her poems have been chosen, albeit she was also a documentary film director, painter and short story writer.

1.3. Aims and Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this comparative study of the poems of Forough Farrokhzad and Kamala Das is a survey about different dimensions of thought and attitude of an Iranian and Indian female poet toward love, life, woman, and society. The minor objectives are finding the similarities and contrasts in their

poems and also reviewing their lives, works and applied themes and languages in their poems.

1.4. Methodology

Considering them as the social and confessional poetesses, the researcher who has been benefited from primary and secondary sources tries to investigate their works comparatively to emphasize this question that if women similar to men and without barriers will discover intuition and knowledge, can they help the development and progress of human being's ideal?

The researcher tries to concentrate on the primary sources – the poems of both the poetesses. She plans to interpret, explain and analyze themes like love, life, woman's sensibilities, desires, pains, sufferings and societies. She also plans to utilize the secondary sources to understand and confirm her own interpretation and explanation. Comparison of the similarities and differences will be made carefully.

1.5. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is the greatness and importance of these two female poets; Kamala Das is one of the Indian poetesses who "has blazed the new trail in modern Indian poetry in English and made it Indian first and last"³. Forough Farrokhzad is among the first generation to embrace a new style of

Persian poetry, pioneered by Nima Yushij (d. 1957) during the 1920s, which demanded that poet's experiment with rhyme, imagery, and the individual voice.

Through a comparative study, we can get familiar with various cultures and literatures and it can be the first step to make a bridge between different thoughts and creative insights in the field of literature.

1.6. Review of Literature

1.6.1. Related Studies

To my knowledge, there is not any similar study, which compares Forough Farrokhzad, and Kamala Das with each other even though, there are many writers who wrote about them or even compared them with other poets.

Dr. Sami Rafiq, the Professor, Dept. of English in Aligarh Muslim University, India in one of her articles –*A Comparative Study of Selected Poems of Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das* (2007) ¹, made a comparative survey about some selected poems of Kamala Das and Sylvia Plath (1932-1963), the American poet, novelist, short story writer and Pulitzer Prize winner. She mentioned though Sylvia Plath happens to be American by birth, and Kamala Das Indian by birth, a comparative study of some of their selected poems has yielded some interesting insights on the universality of female experience, the growth of the feminist movement and the rendering of female experience in a unified idiom. In other words, though the two women poets have a different

cultural and historical background, and the images and symbols are diverse, yet they echo the conviction and the fury of the feminists at limitations placed on women in a male dominated society. Childbirth, wifehood, the relegating of a secondary status to women are some ideas that are dealt with by both poets and they in each of their worlds explore the gross injustices done to women. Two poems from Sylvia Plath's posthumously published collection of poems namely *Lady Lazarus* and *The Applicant* which have received much critical acclaim for their feminist interpretations serve as interesting contrasts to Kamala Das' poems -*The Descendants* and *The Old Playhouse*. The following lines of Plath's poem establish the superiority of woman by asserting that woman is a unique composition and after having opened up her metaphorical skull or personality, it is impossible to define her, neither man nor demigod could put together. Das in her poem however attempts to give identity to the narrator of the poem who is a woman. In the following lines it can be seen that a woman plays many roles, however there is touch of irony, because the woman acquires mixed roles of saint or sinner while the man remains aloof in his extremely secure world like a 'sword in its sheath'. Just as Plath has rebelled against a male ordered world where everything is defined through male oriented images and has attempted to free womanhood of the construct of 'woman', Das too acknowledges the invincibility of the male ego anywhere and everywhere. But unlike Plath she instead of trying to free the woman of male imposed shackles, tries to bring female experience at par with male experience.

Kamala Das has been called a poet in the confessional mode. The confessional poets deal in their poetry with personal emotional experiences, which are generally taboo. What a confessional poet gives us is the psychological equivalent for his or her mental state, and it is such psychological equivalents that we always get in the poetry of Kamala Das, and in this respects she is to be compared to such confessional poets as Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, Roethke, Berryman, Judith Wright and others. E.V.Ramakrishnan (1950) rightly stressed that, in her poetry, Kamala “has always dealt with private humiliations and sufferings which are the stock themes of confessional poetry”.⁴

Almost all the critics and writers such as Vilas Sarang (1942) and Raghul Tilak (1972) believe that quest for love, or rather the failure to find emotional fulfillment through love, is the central theme of Kamala Das’ poetry, and 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, disillusionment and sense of frustration. Along with the compelling intensity of emotion, she has displayed a frankness of manner in dealing with love and sex, which, in Indian poetry in English, was new and refreshing when she began publishing.

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. She was unconventional in life, and is equally unconventional in poetry. She refused

to confirm to the traditional role which a woman and a wife is expected to play. It is appropriate to accept Anisur Rehman's words (1950) that Kamala Das creates a free form, shaking all the established norms of life and art. She was unconventional in life, and is equally unconventional in her diction, and in her verse-form.

A revolt against social norms carries with it, its own punishment. One has to pay the price for it in terms of suffering, and hence it is that discontent and melancholy mark the life and poetry of Kamala Das. Revolt against the male-dominated world, has given her an individuality, a gusto, a courage, and above all poetry, but deep down there are also the dark whispers of mortality, intimations of the truth that our "loneliness is eternal"⁵ and that "we are born with great hollows that need to be filled, for us to feel to be complete".⁶

Self is the nucleus from which all her poetry originates. All her poetry is in the nature of a "psychic striptease"⁷, and she always "exudes autobiography"⁸. Her experiences were limited and so is her range. Nevertheless, like Jane Austen, she recognized the limitations of her range and achieved excellence by working on her 'three inches of ivory'. As Paul Vergheese (1971) points out, "Her strength as well as her weakness as a poet consists in the fact that she is most herself and cannot be referred to literary influences. If this gives her individuality and a personal meaning, it also leads her to lapses of tact and

general looseness in verse structure; otherwise, in her poetry we have an expression of female sensibility at its best”⁹.

Critic after critic has stressed the essential feminine sensibility of Kamala Das, but they have usually erred in pinpointing its sources. Thus, Srinivasa Iyenger (1863-1931) writes, “Kamala Das is a fiercely feminine sensibility that dares without inhibitions to articulate the hurts it has received in an intensive, largely, man-made world”¹⁰. Satya Dev Jaggi also affirms that, “she is intensely conscious of herself as a woman”¹¹. Suresh Kohli (1947) is of the same view when he says that, “her vision is vitally particularized by the woman’s point of view”¹².

With the passing of time, particularly in her last volume of poems *The Descendants*, Kamala Das has shown an increasing concern with disease, sickness, decay and death. An entirely new note is struck in *After the Illness*. Commenting on this fine lyric Davendra Kohli writes, “Concern with disease, illness, decay, and death is at the centre of *After the Illness*, but what emerges from her reflections on the brevity of love is the mysterious force that keeps the lover filled with the thoughts of her survival”¹³.

There was then no death, no end, but a re-uniting
The weary body settling into accustomed grooves
And, he said, his soft, suffering face against my knee
I know you would survive, my darling, I willed it so.

*He had noticed the high greens of my illness, the bones
 Turning sharp beneath the dry loose skin, the yellowed eyes
 The fetid breath and the prayers to unfamiliar Gods
 Who seemed to him so much more beloved than he.
 Did he feel the neglect while I battled with my pain?
 Did he, waking alone at four, remember? There was
 Not much flesh left for the flesh to hunger, the blood had
 Weakened too much to lust, and the skin, without health's
 Anointments, was numb and unyearning. What lusted then
 For him, was it perhaps the deeply hidden soul? ¹⁴*

(After the Illness: The Old Playhouse and Other Poems)

According to the article of Firouzeh Mirrazavi in 2009, Forough Farrokhzad is important in the literary history of Iran for three reasons; First, she was among the first generation to embrace the new style of poetry, pioneered by Nima Yushij during the 1920s, which demanded that poets' experiment with rhyme, imagery, and the individual voice. Second, she was the first modern Iranian woman to graphically articulate private landscapes from a woman's perspective. Finally, she transcended her own literary role and experimented with acting, painting, and documentary film-making.

Mahmoud Kianoush affirms that Forough was the first woman to be bold, even brave enough to write about the hidden feelings of Iranian women. He

stressed that Forough Farrokhzad is the outstanding poet of the Modernist Poetry School who began to use broken meters which are lines of unequal syllables in a poem. She would sometimes let a line fall off the meter in one or two syllables and then return to it. It may or may not have been deliberate but it gave a fresh tone to the music of her poems which is rather the music of thought than of words. Life, death, happiness, sorrow, the beauty of nature, the ugliness of social injustice, hope in love's triumph, despair caused by the force of ignorance and hypocrisy, and other notions and emotions, filled her poems with the spirit of reality, and still, now and then, she returned to the most powerful and the subtlest virtue of her poetic vision: the sacredness of womanhood and the mystical beauty of sex.

Dr. Leyli Jamali, the Professor, Dept. of English in Islamic Azad University of Tabriz, Iran, in one of her articles - *Too Close, Too Far, Death and Rebirth in Sylvia Plath's Ariel and Forough Farrokhzad's Another Birth*(2008)ⁱⁱ, made a comparative survey about three selected poems of Forough Farrokhzad and Sylvia Plath. She believes that both Sylvia and Forough share astoundingly similar points in their lives. Their life spans (1930s to 1960s), their suffering from insufficient fatherly affection in their youth, their search for paternal love in their adolescence, their marriage, divorce and motherhood, their suffering from nervous breakdowns, their attempts to commit suicide three times and their early premature and mysterious deaths stand as common themes in both of their life stories. Likewise, their belonging to the 'Confessional School' of poetry,

their manifested courage in expressing the taboo, their use of rough and colloquial language, their undermining patriarchal rules and rebellious behaviour in the phallogentric literary world brings out countless similar themes in their poetry. Selecting two of their recurring themes, death and rebirth, her paper aimed to read Plath's *Ariel* and Farrokhzad's *Another Birth* and *Let's Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season*; comparatively in order to illustrate similar perspectives in the works of these female poets.

Many reviewers of Plath and Farrokhzad (Azemi and Baraheni in Forrough's case) believe that they belong to the Confessional School of poetry, since both poets deal with the facts and intimate mental and physical experiences in their lives. One of these first-hand experiences is death, appearing as one of the dominant images haunting Plath's *Ariel* and Farrokhzad's *Another Birth*. Critics have discussed Plath's collection as a death-driven volume. As M.L. Rosenthal (1917-1996) notes, "under the other motifs [in *Ariel*], however, is the confusion of terror at death with fascination by it"¹⁵. Peter Dale (1938) remarks that "the most frequent way out of [Plath's] dilemma seems to be death [which] is seen in romantic terms, unsupported by expressed religious beliefs, as purification, a peace, and in some ways a triumph"¹⁶. Likewise, Farrokhzad's *Another Birth* and *Let's Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season* are seen by many Iranian critics, like Siroos Shamisa (1948), as volumes reflecting her desire for death. The poems of these collections address death in a nostalgic way. Even love is associated with death in these volumes. One of the reasons that both poets

portray death so vividly is that they experienced suicide attempts during their lives. Plath attempted suicide when she was ten, twenty, thirty and thirty-one, the last one being successful. Of the first three attempts, she writes in *Lady Lazaru*:

I have done it again.

One year in every ten

I manage it..."¹⁷

Farrokhzad attempted to commit suicide three times. In one case it was because her relationship with Iranian poet Nader Naderpour broke up. For the other two cases, no plausible reason can be found except that they happened because of the absence of a male figure, a beloved praised in Farrokhzad's later poetry.

Nasrin Madani in her book, *In dusty lanes of Innocence – A Comparative Study of the Poems of Forough Farrokhzad and Ghada al-Saman, the Contemporary Syrian Poet* (2006) compared applied theme of Forough's poems with Ghada al-Samman (1942), the Arab Syrian writer, poetess, journalist and novelist whose major themes are love, woman and her situation in male-dominated society, racism, and anti-fanaticism. Her thoughts and language is simple and similar to Forough's although there are some contrasts; for example, Forough is very daring to express the most personal and erotic experiences but Ghada ironically mentioned them.

Flawed relationships, failed love affairs, and disintegrating unions fill page after page of Farrokhzad's poetry, Farzaneh Milani (1947) said. Farrokhzad does not eventually surrender to fear or shame. She breaks through the cultural barrier of experiencing and expressing, even if with much awe and confusion feminine lust. Caught between two equally imperative and irreconcilable drives - fear and feelings of guilt on the one hand and the demands of a passionate body on the other - she chooses less and less to be ruled by the first. Her poetic persona indulges in what women were not allowed to do or express in public.

In an interview with Bernardo Bertolucci, an Italian filmmaker who made a fifteen-minute movie about the poet, Farrokhzad said, "Being a poet means being human,"¹⁸...She truly lived her own message: It bothered her to preach or to see that other intellectuals exhort a message yet live in hypocrisy. In her poetry, Farrokhzad talked about living a simple life with love for humanity and nature. In her life she lived her poetry and once said, to her, "poetry is as important as a religion for a religious person"¹⁹. One, however, might wonder if she ever regretted devoting her life to art and poetry.

Forough Farrokhzad was the product of a repressive society which had closed all the doors to voices that she tried to promote: moderation, inclusion, freedom of speech, and freedom itself; so, she started to revolt. In another part of his book, *Modern Persian Poetry*, Mahmoud Kianoush writes that her first step of rebellion in real life was to separate from her husband, whom she had married

at the age of sixteen as arranged by her parents. Being a divorced mother at the age of nineteen, it was very agonizing for her to pass through this stage of liberation. The second great step Farrokhzad took, this time in her artistic life, was to free herself from the fascinating influence of the romantic Neo-classicist poets, and even of imitating Nima Yushij's innovations in rhythm and style. In an interview published in the literary periodical *Arash*, and reprinted as a foreword to her *Selected Poems*, she had said: "He [Nima Yushij] was my guide, but I was the maker of myself. I have always relied on my own experiments. I should have discovered how Nima managed to reach his new language and form. If I had not discovered this, I would have come to nothing. I would have become an imitator without consciousness. I should have made my own journey, that is to say I should have lived my life"²⁰. When her rebellion against traditional values, and social old norms had gone far enough to give her the freedom of personality for which she had long fought, Forough Farrokhzad began her real journey in the realm of selfhood. It was then that she was born again, both in her world view and in her poetry. From then on, instead of standing against society, she tried to understand it; instead of being the voice of her individual world, she became conscious of the great common spirit of mankind. Her poems, while simple and fluid in their language and imagery, found a new depth and a rather philosophical tone.

They were drowned in their own fear

And the frightened sense of sin

Had paralyzed

Their blind, dumb souls ...

Perhaps

Behind their crushed eyes, at the depth of inanimateness,

Something confused, with a flicker of life,

Was still left;

And, with its faint effort,

It wanted to believe in the purity of the waters' songs.

Perhaps; but what an infinite emptiness!

The sun was dead,

And no one knew

That the name of the sad dove,

Which had escaped from hearts, was Faith.²¹

(The Earthly Verses, Book 4: Another Birth)

1.6.2. Related Concepts and Terms

1.6.2. i. Criticism

Criticism in terms of expectations means democratic judgment over the suitability of a subject for the intended purposes, as opposed to the authoritarian command, which is meant as an absolute realization of the authority's will, thus not open for debate.

Criticism is the activity of judgment or informed interpretation. In many cases it can be synonymous to 'analysis.' In literary and academic contexts, the term criticism most frequently refers to literary criticism, art criticism or other such fields, and to scholars' attempts to understand the aesthetic aspect in depth. In an academic, artistic or literary context it usually refers to the activity of subtle interpretation or analysis of literary criticism.

1.6.2. ii. Comparative Literature

Comparative literature is a critical scholarship dealing with the literature of two or more than two different linguistic, cultural or national groups. While most frequently practiced with works of different languages, it may also be performed on works of the same language if the works originate from different nations or cultures among which that language is spoken. It also includes comparisons of different types of art in the range of inquiry. In chapter 2, this term will be expanded.

1.6.2. iii. Confessional Poetry

Confessional poetry emphasizes the intimate, and sometimes unflattering, information about details of the poet's personal life, such as in poems about illness, sexuality, and despondence. The confessionalist label was applied to a number of poets of the 1950s and 1960s. John Berryman, Allen Ginsberg, Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath, Theodore Roethke, Anne Sexton, and William De Witt Snodgrass have all been called 'Confessional Poets'.

What defines poetry as confessional is not the subject matter, but how the issue represented is explored. Confessional poetry explores personal details about the authors' life without meekness, modesty, or discretion. Because of this, confessional poetry is a popular form of creative writing that many people enjoy not only to read but to embark upon. Another element that is specific to this poetry is self-revelation achieved through creating the poem. This passes on to the reader, and a connection is made.

1.6.3. iv. Modernism

Modernism, in its broadest definition, is modern thought, character, or practice. More specifically, the term describes both a set of cultural tendencies and an array of associated cultural movements, originally arising from wide-scale and far-reaching changes to Western society in the late 19th century and early 20th century. The term encompasses the activities and output of those who felt that the traditional forms of art, architecture, literature, religious faith, social organization and daily life were becoming outdated in the new economic, social and political conditions of an emerging fully industrialized world.

At the end, it is noteworthy to mention the framework of this research: in chapter II, we shall be looking more closely at the process of appearance and development of both the term and the subject of comparative literature. Chapter III will look on modern Persian poetry, contemporary Persian female poets, and thematic analysis of Forough Farrokhzad's poems. Chapter IV will carry on

contemporary Indo – Anglian poetry, contemporary Indo – Anglian female poets, and thematic analysis of Kamala Das’ poems. Chapter V examines comparative study of different aspects as expressed in the poems of Kamala Das and Forough Farrokhzad, and their similarities and differences. Chapter IV sums up findings and presents Conclusions.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Farrokhzad, Forough. *Book 4: Another Birth*, Trans. Manavaz Alexanderian, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 20)
2. Kamala Das, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*, Mumbai, Orient Longman, 2004, (P: 26).
3. Raghuku Tilak, *New Indian English Poets and Poetry*, New Delhi, Rama Brothers India PVT.LTD, 2005, (P: 3).
4. Ibid. (P: 112).
5. Kamala Das, *My Story*, New Delhi, Harper Collins Publishers, 2009, (P: 187).
6. Ibid. (P: 187).
7. Raghuku Tilak, *New Indian English Poets and Poetry*, New Delhi, Rama Brothers India PVT.LTD, 2005, (P: 107).
8. Ibid. (P: 107).
9. Ibid. (P: 107).
10. Ibid. (P: 114).
11. Ibid. (P: 114).
12. Ibid. (P: 114).
13. Ibid. (P: 105).
14. Kamala Das, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*, Mumbai, Orient Longman, 2004, (P: 50).

-
15. M.L.Rosenthal, *"Poets of the Dangerous Way" in Plath: The Critical Heritage*, Ed. Linda Wagner Martin, New York, Routledge,Chapman and Hall Inc., 1988, (P:60).
 16. Ibid. (P: 62).
 17. Sylvia Plath, *The Collected Poems*, Ed. Ted Hughes, New York, Buccaneer Books Inc., 1981, (P: 244).
 18. Raghuku Tilak, *New Indian English Poets and Poetry*, New Delhi, Rama Brothers India PVT.LTD, 2005, (P: 105).
 19. Shahnaz Moradi Kouchi, *Forough Farrokhzad: A Miscellany*, Tehran, Ghatreh Publishers, 2005, (P: 351).
 20. Ibid. (P: 295).
 21. Farrokhzad, Forough. *Book 4: Another Birth*, Trans. Manavaz Alexanderian, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 65)
 22. Mahmoud Kianoush, *Modern Persian Poetry*, Maryland, Ibex Publishers, 1996
 23. Nasrin Madani, *In dusty lanes of Innocence – A Comparative Study of the Poems of Forough Farrokhzad and Ghada al-Saman, the Contemporary Syrian Poet* , Tehran, Cheshmeh Publishers, 2006
 24. Peter Dale, *"O Honey Bees Come Build"*, *Sylvia Plath: The Critical Heritage*, Ed. Linda Wagner Martin, New York, Routledge,Chapman and Hall Inc., 1988

25. Vilas Sarang, *Indian English Poetry since 1950: an anthology*, Hyderabad, Disha Books, 2007

LINKS AND WEBSITES

- I. Sami Refiq, “A Comparative Study of Selected Poems of Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das”, August 12, 2007, Web. 01.11.2010.
<www.shvoong.com/humanities/1647218-comparative-study-selected-poems-sylvia/>
- II. Leyli Jamali, “Too Close, Too Far, Death and Rebirth in Sylvia Plath’s Ariel and Forough Farrokhzad’s Another Birth”, 2008, Web. 01.11.2010.
<www.ebookpedia.net/Too-Close--Too-Far--Death-and-Rebirth-in-Sylvia-Plath-s-Ariel-and----.html>
- III. www.google.com
- IV. www.wikipedia.com

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



Chapter II

Theoretical Framework

2.1. Foreword: What Is Comparative Literature?

Sooner or later anyone who claims to be working in comparative literature has to try and answer the inevitable question: What is it?

The simplest answer is that comparative literature involves the study of texts across cultures, that it is interdisciplinary and that it is concerned with patterns of connection in literatures across both time and space. The aim of this chapter which is an adaptation of the book, *Comparative Literature – A Critical Introduction* (1993) by Susan Bassnett is to clarify this concept.

Most people do not start with comparative literature; they end up with it in one way or another, travelling towards it from different points of departure. Sometimes the journey begins with a desire to move beyond the boundaries of a single subject area that might appear to be too constraining, at other times a reader may be impelled to follow up what appear to be similarities between texts or authors from different cultural contexts. And some readers may simply be following the view propounded by Matthew Arnold in his Inaugural Lecture at Oxford in 1857 when he said:

*Everywhere there is connection, everywhere there is illustration. No single event, no single literature is adequately comprehended except in relation to other events, to other literatures.*¹

It could almost be argued that anyone who has an interest in books embarks on the road towards what might be termed comparative literature: reading Chaucer, we come across Boccaccio; we can trace Shakespeare's source materials through Latin, French, Spanish and Italian; we can study the ways in which Romanticism developed across Europe at a similar moment in time, follow the process through which Baudelaire's fascination with Edgar Allan Poe enriched his own writing, consider how many English novelists learned from the great nineteenth-century Russian writers (in translation, of course), compare how James Joyce borrowed from and loaned to Italo Svevo. There is no limit to the list of examples we could devise. Once we begin to read we move across frontiers, making associations and connections, no longer reading within a single literature but within the great open space of Literature with a capital 'L', what Goethe termed *Weltliteratur*. Goethe noted that he liked to "keep informed about foreign productions" and advised anyone else to do the same. "It is becoming more and more obvious to me", he remarked, "that poetry is the common property of all mankind"².

At this juncture, one could be forgiven for assuming that comparative literature is nothing more than common sense, an evitable stage in reading, made

increasingly easier by international marketing of books and by the availability of translation. But if we shift perspective slightly and look again at the term ‘Comparative Literature’, what we find instead is a history of violent debate that goes right back to the earliest usage of the term at the beginning of the nineteenth century and continues still today. Critics at the end of the twentieth century, in the age of post-modernism, still wrestle with the same questions that were posed more than a century ago: What is the object of study in comparative literature? How can comparison be the object of anything? If individual literatures have a canon, what might a comparative canon be? How does the comparatist select what to compare? Is comparative literature a discipline? Or is it simply a field of study? These and a great many other questions refuse to go away, and since the 1950s, we have been hearing all too frequently about what Rene Wellek defined as “the crisis of Comparative Literature”³.

Comparative Literature as a term seems to arouse strong passions, both for and against. As early as 1903, Benedetto Croce argued that comparative literature was a non-subject, contemptuously dismissing that it might be seen as a separate discipline. He discussed the definition of comparative literature as the exploration of “the vicissitudes, alterations, developments and reciprocal differences”⁴ of themes and literary ideas across literatures, and concluded that “there is no study more arid than researches of this sort”⁵. This kind of work, Croce maintained, is to be classified “in the category of erudition purely and

simply”⁶. Instead of something called comparative literature, he suggested that the proper object of study should be literary history:

*The comparative history of literature is history understood in its true sense as a complete explanation of the literary work, encompassed in all its relationships, disposed in the composite whole of universal literary history (where else could it ever be placed?), seen in those connections and preparations that are its raison d'être.*⁷

Croce's argument was that the term 'comparative literature' was obfuscatory, disguising the obvious, that is, the fact that the true object of study was literary history. Considering the pronouncements on comparative literature made by scholars such as Max Koch, founder and editor of the two German comparative journals, *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literatur* (1887-1910) and *Studien zur vergleichenden Literaturgeschichte* (1901-9), Croce claimed he could not distinguish between literary history pure and simple and comparative literary history. The term, 'comparative literature', he maintained, had no substance to it.

But other scholars made grandiose claims for comparative literature. Charles Mills Gayley, one of the founders of North American comparative literature, proclaimed in the same year as Croce's attack that the working premise of the student of comparative literature was:

literature as a distinct and integral medium of thought, a common institutional expression of humanity; differentiated, to be sure, by the social conditions of the individual, by racial, historical, cultural and linguistic influences, opportunities, and restrictions, but, irrespective of age or guise, prompted by the common needs and aspirations of man, sprung from common faculties, psychological and physiological, and obeying common laws of material and mode, of the individual and social humanity. ⁸

Remarkably similar sentiments to those expressed in 1974 by Francoise Jost, when he claimed that ‘national literature’ cannot constitute an intelligible field of study because of its ‘arbitrarily limited perspective’, and that comparative literature:

represents more than an academic discipline. It is an overall view of literature, of the world of letters, a humanistic ecology, a literary Weltanschauung, a vision of the cultural universe, inclusive and comprehensive. ⁹

Such claims go far beyond the methodological and shed some lights on quiet why the debate on comparative literature should have been so bitter. For Jost, like Gayley and others before him, comparative literature is proposing as some kind of world religion. The underlying suggestion is that all cultural differences disappear when readers take up great works; art is seen as an instrument of

universal harmony and the comparatist is one who facilitates the spread of that harmony. Moreover, the comparatist must possess special skills; Wellek and Warren in their *Theory of Literature*, a book that was enormously significant in comparative literature when it first appeared in 1949, suggest that:

*Comparative Literature ... will make high demands on the linguistic proficiencies of our scholars. It asks for a widening of perspective, a suppression of local and provincial sentiments, not easy to achieve.*¹⁰

The comparatist is here depicted as someone with a vocation, as a kind of international ambassador working in the comparative literatures of United Nations. For Rene Wellek and Warren go on to state that “Literature is one; as art and humanity are one”.¹¹ It is an idealistic vision that recurs in the aftermath of major international crisis; Goethe could confidently (and quite wrongly) assert in 1872 that “national literature means little now”¹², and Rene Wellek and Warren offered the cultural equivalent of the movement towards a United Nations Assembly that was so powerfully felt in the aftermath of the Second World War.

The high ideals of such a vision of comparative literature have not been met. A decade after *Theory of Literature* appeared, Rene Wellek was already talking about the crisis in comparative literature and even as the subject appeared to be gaining ground in the 1960s and early 1970s, flaws in the idea of universal

values of literature as one could already be seen. The great waves of critical thought that swept through one after the other from structuralism through to post-structuralism, from feminism to deconstruction, from semiology to psychoanalysis – shifted attention away from the activity of comparing texts and tracking patterns of influence between writers towards the role of a reader. And as each new wave broke over the preceding one, notions of single, harmonious readings were shattered forever.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, high-flying graduate students in the West turned to comparative literature as a radical subject, because at that time it appeared to be transgressive, moving as it claimed to do across the boundaries of single literature study. There was no coherent methodology, which did not matter, nor did it matter that the debates on whether the subject existed or not still continued unabated from the previous century. “We spend far too much of our energy talking ... about Comparative Literature and not enough of it comparing the literature”, complained Harry Levin in 1969, “using more practical work and less agonizing about the theory”¹³. But Levin’s proposal was already out of date; by the late 1970s a new generation of high-flying graduate students in the West had turned to Literary Theory, Women’s Studies, Semiotics, Film and Media Studies and Cultural Studies as the radical subject choices, abandoning Comparative Literature to what were increasingly seen as dinosaurs from a liberal-humanist prehistory.

Yet even as that process was underway in the West, comparative literature began to gain ground in the rest of the world. New programmes in comparative literature began to emerge in China, in Taiwan, in Japan and other Asian countries, based, however, not on any ideal of universalism but on the very aspect of literary study that many western comparatists had sought to deny: the specificity of national literatures. As Swapan Majumdar puts it:

It is because of this predilection for National Literature – much deplored by the Anglo – American critics as a methodology – that Comparative Literature has struck roots in the Third World nations and in India in particular. ¹⁴

Developments in comparative literature beyond Europe and North America do indeed cut through and across all kinds of assumptions about literature that have come increasingly to be seen as Eurocentric. Wole Soyinka and a whole range of African critics have exposed the pervasive influence of Hegel, who argued that African culture was weak in contrast to what he claimed were higher, more developed cultures, and who effectively denied Africa a history. James Snead, in an essay attacking Hegel, points out that:

The outstanding fact of late twentieth-century European culture is its ongoing reconciliation with black culture. The mystery may be that it took so long to discern the elements of black culture already

*there in latent form, and to realize that the separation between the cultures was perhaps all along not one of nature, but one of force.*¹⁵

What we have today, then, is a very varied picture of comparative literature studies that changes according to where it is taking place. African, Indian, Caribbean critics have challenged the refusal of a great deal of Western literary criticism to accept the implications of their literary and cultural policy.

2.2. Appearance to Development of the Term - Comparative Literature

There is general agreement that comparative literature has been acquired from a series of French anthologies used for the teaching of literature, published in 1816 and entitled, *Cours de littérature comparee*. In an essay discussing the origins of the term, Rene Wellek notes that this title was “unused and unexplained”¹⁶ but he also shows how the term seems to have crept into use through the 1820s and 1830s in France. He suggests that German versions of the term, ‘*vergleichende Literaturgeschichte*’, first appeared in a book by Moriz Carreiere in 1854, while the earliest English usage is attributed to Matthew Arnold, who referred to “comparative literatures” in the plural in a letter of 1848.¹⁷

Regardless of whether named individuals can be credited with having introduced the term into their own languages, it is clear that some concept of comparative literature, which involved a consideration of more than one literature, was in circulation in Europe in the early years of the nineteenth

century. The term seems to have derived from a methodological process applicable to the sciences, in which comparing (or contrasting) served as a means of confirming a hypothesis.

What becomes apparent when we look at the origins of comparative literature is that the term predated the subject. People used the phrase comparative literature without having clear ideas about what it was. With the advantages of retrospection, we can see that comparative was set against national and that whilst the study of national literatures risked accusations of partisanship; the study of comparative literature carried with it a sense of transcendence of the narrowly nationalistic. In other words, the term was used loosely but was associated with the desire for peace in Europe and for harmony between nations. Central to this idealism was also the belief that comparison could be undertaken on a mutual basis. Therefore, Chasles in 1835 and Abel Francois Villemain in 1829 hailed the value of studying patterns of influence, listing the names of great writers from a variety of different countries. Comparative literary study, according to Chasles, was to be before anything else, a pleasure trip, involving a look at great figures from the sixteenth century onwards. Communication, comingling, and sharing were keywords in this view of comparative literature, which depoliticized writing and aspired towards universal concord. Comparative literature seems to have emerged as an antidote to nationalism, even though its roots went deep into national cultures. Chasles and Villemain could discuss the greatness of past writers with urbanity and

scholarly distinction, but they were primarily Frenchman and their interest focused on the gift-giving process of literary influences between France and its neighbors. Likewise, the enormous interest throughout Europe in the early nineteenth century for Byron and Shakespeare, as evidenced by the proliferation of translations of their works, was not so much due to an interest in England and English culture, but rather due to the use that could be made of two writers who could be read as prototypical revolutionaries.

The idea that there was mutuality in comparison was a myth, yet it was a myth as profoundly believed as the myth of universal, transcultural greatness.

In 1961, in a collection of essays on comparative literature published by the Southern Illinois University Press and edited by Newton Stallknecht and Horst Frenz, Henry Remak attempted to define what he called the ‘American school’:

*Comparative Literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of the relationships between literature on the one hand, and other areas of knowledge and belief, such as the arts (e.g. painting, sculpture, architecture, music), philosophy, history, the social sciences (e.g. politics, economics, sociology), the sciences, religion, etc., on the other. In brief, it is the comparison of one literature with another or others, and the comparison of literature with other spheres of human expression.*¹⁸

Remak's essay laid out the basis of an American comparative literature that was distinctive from the French school, thereby breaking the power of the French model once and for all. Remak's definition was a summary of trends in practice across the United States and became in effect the manifesto of the American School of comparative literature. He justified himself, stating that he had deliberately chosen an approach that is not historical or generic, but rather descriptive and synchronic. He contrasted his own approach with that of former comparatists and provided an annotated bibliography of volumes of comparative literature. He was well aware of the terminological problem, referring to the haziness of the distinction between comparative and general literature, for example, and agreeing that there is "twilight zone where a case can be made pro and con the comparativeness of a given topic."¹⁹

Remak believed that the French approach was too narrow, and relied too heavily on factual evidence. Influence studies in the French tradition, he argued, were unimaginative, deriving from a positive approach, and so he presented an alternative model:

In a good many influence studies, the location of sources has been given too much attention, rather than such questions as: what was retained and what was rejected, and why, and how was the material absorbed and integrated, and with what success? If conducted in this fashion, influence studies contribute not only to our knowledge

*of literary history but to our understanding of the creative process
and of the literary work of art.*²⁰

Remak's wide-ranging definition has been frequently quoted and, not infrequently attacked. While French scholars spent a considerable amount of time and energy trying to confine comparative literature within boundaries, delineating precisely what could and could not be considered proper to the subject, Remak and his colleagues were proposing a definition that deliberately transgressed boundaries. Following Remak and the American school, anything could be compared with anything else, regardless even of whether it was literature or not. Crucial to Remak's argument was the notion that comparative literature should not be regarded as a separate discipline with its own laws, but should rather be seen as an auxiliary discipline, as a bridge between subject areas. His approach centres around the keyword 'process', unlike the French emphasis on 'product'. Faced with the task of laying down rules, he avoids it and shifts the burden of responsibility onto the individual who, he argues, must decide what the bases for comparative study are to be.

One of the bases that Remak avoids is the vexed question of nationalism, and indeed, in his definition cited above, he uses the more neutral term 'country' instead. A country can be thought of more in geographical than ideological terms, and so his definition is depoliticized in a very significant way.

The process of depoliticization of comparative literature is a hallmark of the American school, in marked contrast to the development of comparative literature in Europe, and although heavily influenced by New Criticism, it goes back a long way, finding its roots in some of the earlier work in the nineteenth century. Charles Mills Gayley, who set up comparative literature at Berkeley in the 1890s and taught the hugely successful Great Books course that was to serve as a model for future US development, saw his work as quintessentially humanitarian and looked back to a line deriving from Matthew Arnold, via Posnett and Arthur Marsh. He was also well aware of the problems of definition and method, but in his paper entitled *What is Comparative Literature?* (1903), the clear differences between his approach and the attitude of European scholars can be seen. Gayley proposed that, comparative literature should be seen as nothing more or less than literary philology, and formulated an early version of the American school definition, by insisting on the importance of psychology, anthropology, linguistics, social sciences, religion, and art in the study of literature. Distanced from the nationalistic fervour of European states, and the struggle for independence of emergent Latin American nations, Gayley and fellow American comparatists looked instead to a model that involved interdisciplinary work. Literary study was a part of a network of related subjects, which nourished one another and were part of the organic structure that was Culture. Problems of defining nationhood according to language differences or political boundaries were set aside, and instead what we find is the melting pot

theory of comparative literature. Just as the United States prided itself on providing a melting pot for all comers, into which national and linguistic differences would be cast so as to be forged into something new and all-encompassing, so the American perspective on comparative literature was based from the start on ideas of interdisciplinarity and universalism. Scholars argued that study needed to be systematic, but refrained from any further restrictions. Gayley quite openly complained about the term ‘comparative literature’ itself, which he felt was too slippery and misleading, but could not devise anything that might be adequate as an alternative. Instead, he endeavoured to establish certain principles for the development of the subject, chief of which was a turning aside from the pathway trodden by European comparatists. Gayley even went so far as to challenge one of the fundamental premises of the French school, that is, that comparative literature involved the study of two or more literatures. He pointed out that the study of international relations and influences was one branch of the subject, and that “the study of a single literature may be just as scientifically comparative if it seeks the reason and law of the literature in the psychology of the race of humanity”.²¹

Gayley’s contemporary, Hutcheson Macaulay Posnett, founding father of Antipodean Comparative Literature, also proposed a non-nationalistic model. In his book, *Comparative Literature*, he reviewed the responses to his book and considered the state of comparative literature as a subject in the English-

speaking world. His call for Chairs* to be established in comparative literature had gone unheeded in Britain, he noted, though it had been adopted in the United States, and he claimed that despite amateur criticism, there had been considerable advances in the field. Posnett's views on comparative literature rested on an evolutionary model, and he proposed that the fundamental principles of the subject were "social evolution, individual evolution, and the influence of the environment on the social and individual life of man".²² The term 'comparative', he suggested, was synonymous with 'historical', but terminology notwithstanding, the method was the same, and consisted in "retracting the steps man has taken individually and collectively in reaching the highest social life."²³

Posnett's evolutionary model and Gayley's melting pot idealism stand in marked contrast to European versions of comparative literature, and as we try to make sense of the different strands that are still with us today, it is helpful to try to disentangle European approaches from non-European ones. The development of comparative literature in France or Germany or Hungary or Italy ran parallel to socio-political changes, and was always intricately bound up with a sense of the importance of history. In the United States, or in New Zealand where Posnett taught, the priorities were different. In a very general term, we can make a distinction between what could be termed Old World comparative literature – where the emphasis was on sources, on documenting how texts came to be read

* Chairs of Comparative Literature where this subject acquired academic status.

across cultural and linguistic boundaries, on tracing origins and establishing the cultural basis of national consciousness – and New World comparative literature, where the emphasis was quite different. New World comparatists saw their task in international terms; they were concerned with tracing humanity's achievements through time and space, and across disciplinary lines. The question of how to define a national literature was almost irrelevant; instead, what mattered was what Posnett called the great moral need of studying those truths produced by great art.

2.3. Afterword and Summing Up

In the nineteenth century, the principle distinction made in comparative literature was between French school, with its emphasis on positivism and its attempts to narrow down the criteria for comparing texts, and the German school, with its emphasis on *zeitgeist** and on racial and ethnic roots. The German model was taken over by Nazis with appalling consequences, as right-wing scholars sought to show that there was literary and historical justification for genocidal policies that ranked the Aryan race as superior to all others. Reaction against this kind of gross simplification of important nineteenth-century thinking about origins and about the significance of oral folk culture resulted in the suppression of an important line of Romantic comparative literature, and it has only quite recently begun to be rehabilitated. In the post-war

* *Zeitgeist*: *German* ['tsaitgaist], *n* - the spirit, attitude, or general outlook of a specific time or period, esp. as it is reflected in literature, philosophy, etc.

period, the French school dominated comparative studies, until challenged by the American school, with its interdisciplinary approach and its emphasis on the universal values of literature. By the early 1970s, these two models came to be seriously challenged, and the alternative models came from outside the Euro-American tradition.

In many parts of the world, there are now university departments of Western Literature that presuppose a different categorization from that traditionally adopted by European and European-influenced literature departments. Binary comparative literature sees French and Italian literature, for example, as differentiated in all kinds of ways – linguistically, geographically, historically, and aesthetically. But once both those literatures are included under a general heading of European Literature or Western Literature, it is the similarities and the links between them that come sharply into focus rather than the differences. From the perspective of a student in Japan or Kenya, for example, what is striking, is the common ground between the French and Italian literary traditions along with the peculiar antagonism noted by Freud when he pointed out that “closely related races keep one another at arm’s length: the South German cannot endure the North German, the Englishman casts every kind of aspersion upon the Scot, the Spaniard despises the Portuguese”.²⁴ Viewed from a perspective outside Europe, the parameters change. Moreover, the non-European model of comparative study has as its starting point a very different agenda from that of Western comparative literature. The time has come to recognize that we

now have a post-European model of comparative literature, one that reconsiders key questions of cultural identity, literary canons, and the political implications of cultural influence, periodization and literary history and firmly rejects the ahistoricity of the American school and of the formalist approach.

In the foreword, the researcher has presented how comparative literature as a subject appears to be declining in the West, even as it is expanding and developing elsewhere in the world. It was argued that literary theory has now become the growth area of literary study in Western Europe and in the United States, probably in reaction against the antiquated methods and complacency of much of the work in comparative literature. But outside the Euro-American tradition those antiquated methods have no place, and instead what we find is a dynamic comparative literature which can effectively be compared to the earliest appearance of the subject in revolutionary Europe in the early nineteenth century.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Susan Bassnett, *Comparative Literature – A Critical Introduction*, Oxford UK & Cambridge USA, Blackwell Publisher, 1993, (P: 1).
2. Ibid. (P: 2).
3. Ibid. (P: 2).
4. Ibid. (P: 2).
5. Ibid. (P: 2).
6. Ibid. (P: 2).
7. Ibid. (P: 3).
8. Ibid. (P: 3).
9. Ibid. (P: 4).
10. Ibid. (P: 4).
11. Ibid. (P: 4).
12. Ibid. (P: 4).
13. Ibid. (P: 5).
14. Ibid. (P: 5).
15. Ibid. (P: 6).
16. Ibid. (P: 12).
17. Ibid. (P: 12).
18. Ibid. (P: 31).
19. Ibid. (P: 32).

20. Ibid. (P: 32).

21. Ibid. (P: 34).

22. Ibid. (P: 34).

23. Ibid. (P: 34).

24. Ibid. (P: 41).

25. Ulrich Weisstein, *Comparative Literature and Literary Theory: Survey and Introduction*, Trans. William Riggan (in collaboration with the author), Bloomington and London, Indiana University Press, 1973

CHAPTER III

AN OUTLOOK OF CONTEMPORARY PERSIAN POETRY

AND

THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF FOROUGH FARROKHZAD'S POEMS



Chapter III

An Outlook of Contemporary Persian Poetry and Thematic Analysis of Forough Farrokhzad's Poems

3.1. Modernist Poetry

Mahmoud Kianush in his book, *Modern Persian Poetry* (1996) – which the following lines of this section are an adaptation of that book – explained the trend of Persian poetry in different periods. Chronological division of Persian poetry based on radical changes, we can distinguish not more than two periods of Persian poetry: one traditional, from the tenth to nearly mid- twentieth century; the other modernist, from about World War II to the present. Within the long period of traditional poetry, however, four periods can be traced, each marked by a distinct stylistic development.

The first of these, comprising roughly the tenth to the twelfth century, is characterized by strong court patronage, a profusion of panegyrics, and an exalted style (*sabk-e fakher*). One may define this style (generally known as Khorasani, from the association of most of its earlier representatives with Greater Khorasan) by its lofty diction, dignified tone, and highly literate language.

The second, from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, is marked by the prominence of lyric poetry, the consequent development of the *ghazal* into the

most significant verse form, and the diffusion of mystical thought. Its style is generally dubbed Eraqi because of the association of some of its earlier exponents with central and western Persia (even though its two major representatives, Sadi and Hafez, were from the southern province of Fars); it is known by its lyric quality, tenderness of feeling, mellifluous meters, and the relative simplicity of its language.

The third period, which extends from the fifteenth well into the eighteenth century, is associated with the Indian style of Persian poetry (sometimes called Isfahani or Safavi). It has its beginning in the Timurid period and is marked by an even greater prominence of lyric poetry, although it is somewhat devoid of the linguistic elegance and musicality of the preceding period. The poets of this period often busied themselves with exploring subtle thoughts and farfetched images and elaborating upon worn-out traditional ideas and metaphors.

The fourth period, from approximately the eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century, is known as the Literary Revival (*bazgasht-e adabi*). It features a reaction against the poetic stagnation and linguistic foibles of the late Safavid style, and a return to the Eraqi style of lyric poetry and the Khorasani style of panegyrics. One can certainly make a case for dividing this period into two parts: before and after the Revolution for the Constitution (1906-11). The latter part saw many attempts at modernizing Persian poetry by the introduction of new themes, colloquial language, patriotic subjects, and political and social

satire; nevertheless, the formal aspect of Persian poetry resisted change, and major poets continued writing in the traditional styles.

The current phase of Persian poetry, which dates from World War II, is characterized by a radical break with the literary tradition of the past and by the introduction of fresh imagery and poetic forms.

Modernist poetry, namely, a poetry that departs radically from the traditional school of the old masters, began to emerge only after World War II, when the deep social changes, which had been developing for some time, finally challenged the venerable literary tradition in a drastic fashion and eroded its foundations. It not only dispensed with the necessity of rhyme and consistent meter, but it also rejected the imagery of traditional poetry and departed noticeably from its mode of expression.

Nima Yushij (1897-1960), the father of modernist poetry, died in relative obscurity, but after World War II a number of young poets took up his cause, fighting against the shackles of literary conventions and writing free verse, sometimes with a vengeance. The vogue gathered momentum, and by the late 1950s, it had become the dominant mode of avant-garde Persian poetry. Most of the contemporary literary movements in the West, from the Symbolist to Letterist to Imagist schools, have found exponents among modernist Persian poets.

In modernist poetry, all formal canons, thematic and imagistic conventions, as well as mystical dimensions of the traditional school are largely abandoned, and the poets (taking their cues from the West rather than from native traditions) feel free to adapt the form of their poems to the requirements of their individual tastes and artistic outlooks. Hence, the great variety of styles is among modernist poets.

Nader Naderpour (1929-2000), whose well-crafted poems are distinguished by a rich imagery no less than by the felicity of his polished language, has produced poems of considerable elegance and appeal since the mid-forties; he is also among the few modern critics who have not confused artistic integrity and achievement with commitment to definite sociopolitical views.

Ahmad Shamlu (Bamdad) (1925-2000), who was prompted by his innovative urge, has experimented with a variety of styles, has remained a major influence among the modernist poets.

An outstanding poet of this school is Forough Farrokhzad (1935-1967), a female poet who casts her challenge against the shackles of social convention and marital morality, and the expression of her soul's search for love and fulfillment, in impassioned poems of remarkable sensuality and daring.

Mehdi Akhavan-e Saleh (1928-1990), also a follower of the Nima School, has produced among others, long poems of veiled protest and of epic quality.

In Sohrab Sepehri (1928-1980), a poet of serene simplicity but overweening imagery, we find an original poet singing in praise of the simple pleasures of life and basking in the contemplation of nature.

Lyric poetry has found able representatives in Simin Behbehani (1927) and Houshang Ebtehaj (Sayeh) (1928). Many other poets, mostly beginning their careers in the 1950s, have become well known in the modernist school. It is a fact, however, that practically no new major poet has come to the fore since the mid-sixties.

A poet of the last generation before the Islamic Revolution worthy of mention is Mohammad-Reza Shafiei Kadkani (M. Sereshk) (1939). Though he is from Khorassan and sways between allegiance to Nima Youshij and Akhavan-e Saleth, in his poetry he shows the influences of Hafez and Mowlavi. He uses simple, lyrical language and is mostly inspired by the political atmosphere. He is the most successful of those poets who in the past four decades have tried hard to find a synthesis between the two models of Ahmad Shamlu and Nima Youshij.

While the core of modernist poetry remains romantic, many poets of a liberal or radical bent have been preoccupied with protest against the establishment as well as with promoting their social and political ideas. Poems of protest, however, are mostly couched in allegory, symbolic language and muffled terms, as open criticism of sensitive issues could be perilous.

Modernist poets have, no doubt, produced works of considerable freshness and beauty, more in concert with the contemporary cultural climate of Iran than traditional poetry, but the new freedom and the continuing absence of well-defined and universally accepted criteria have also led to much inept and even nonsensical writing.

With the emergence of newspapers in Iran, which opened the way for political and literary magazines, the written, and consequently the literary language, was one of the essential elements of any movement towards the modernization of literature in general. The new Persian literary movement cannot be understood without an understanding of the intellectual movements among Iranian philosophical circles. Given the social and political climate of Iran in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's, which led to the Persian Constitutional Revolution of, 1906–1911, the idea that change in poetry was necessary became widespread. Many argued that Persian poetry should reflect the realities of a country in transition. This idea was propagated by notable literary figures such as Ali Akbar Dehkhoda (1879-1956) and Abolqasem Aref (1882-1934), who challenged the traditional system of Persian poetry in terms of introducing new content and experimentation with rhetoric, lexico-semantics, and structure. Some researchers argue that the notion of "sociopolitical ramifications of esthetic changes" led to the idea of poets as social leaders trying the limits and possibilities of social change." ¹

An important movement in modern Persian literature centered on the question of modernization and Westernization and whether these terms are synonymous when describing the evolution of Iranian society. It can be argued that almost all advocates of modernism in Persian literature, from Akhundzadeh (1812-1878), Kermani (d.1896), and Malkom Khan (1833-1908) to Dekhoda (1879-1956), Aref (1882-1934), Bahar (1884-1951), and Rafat (1887-1920), were inspired by developments and changes that had occurred in Western, particularly European literatures. Such inspirations did not mean blindly copying Western models but, rather, adapting aspects of Western literature and changing them to fit the needs of Iranian culture.

Following the pioneering works of Ahmad Kasravi (1890-1946), Sadeq Hedayat (1903-1951) and many others, the Iranian wave of comparative literature and literary criticism reached a symbolic crest with the emergence of Ebrahim Golestan (b.1922), Abdolhossein Zarrinkoub (1923-1999), Shahrokh Meskoob (1924-2005), and Houshang Golshiri (1938-2000).

3.2. The Tradition of Women's Writing in Contemporary Iran

Persian poetry is as old as the holy book of Zoroastrians, Avesta, in which the first form of poetry has been documented in 642 AD. Some research documents also indicate that Atossa, the wife of Darius the Great (one of the kings of Achaemenid Empire who reigned from 521 to 486 BC) was also a poetess.

In her book, *Veils and Words, the Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers* (1992), Dr. Farzaneh Milani discussed about women's literary tradition in Iran. She believes that literature in Iran has long possessed a predominately-masculine character. Conspicuously absent from it has been the presence of women as writers or critics, as makers of literary tradition. Until recently, little has been heard of women writers, painters, musicians, architects, actors, potters, calligraphers. The achievements of those women, who against all odds, managed to nurture their creative talents, have remained for the most part unrecognized, invisible. This invisibility extends beyond women as makers of art to women as objects of representations. The palace reliefs of Persepolis are telling manifestations of Iranian women's invisibility – pictorial or otherwise: “Among the many figures in Persepolis women are completely absent. The hidden force in history is particularly hidden in this first Iranian Empire. Even the animals carried as gift for the king by various delegations are, with one exception, male. And the presence of the only female creature, a lioness, brought by the Elamites, can easily be explained by the age of the two cubs she accompanies: they still need suckling.”²

For centuries, the written literary potential of Iranian women has been repressed, muffled. Easy access to the power, privilege, and arena of the written word was for long denied to them. The long silence of women in more than a thousand years of a rich written literary tradition needs to be studied and elaborated upon. Why are women writers almost absent from our classical

literary scene? How could anyone or anything have been so successful in silencing such a large number of people for so long? Why does the beginning of women's literary tradition in Iran coincide with their attempt to unveil? What is the relationship between physical and verbal self-expression, especially, as it concerns experiences and constructions of gender?

Farzaneh Milani states that if Iranian women writers, or their many mute foremothers, are to be understood and appreciated more fully, if the true impact of their writing is to be felt, then the conditions out of which their literary tradition was born have to be understood. In a society concerned obsessively with keeping the worlds of men and women apart, with an ideal of feminine as silent, immobile, and invisible, women writers have not found it easy to flourish. They had to subvert the system that had for centuries confined their bodies and their voices, exiled, and excluded them. Even if they were lucky enough to be allowed some education and the opportunity to cultivate their creativity, their effort to build an identity as writers has often entailed a conscious rebellion against stereotypes of women's place in both society and literature, against their culture's idealization of woman as 'solemn and silent'.

The veil, from her perspective, refers to any form of extra covering a woman has to wear on top of her dress when in public or in the presence of forbidden men, that is, all the men who could marry her, those who are free of incest taboos. This definition includes the different shapes, sizes, and forms of the veil:

from the all-encompassing cloak that covers the whole body but leaves the face bare, to the kind that covers the face as well, to the headscarf worn by rural and tribal women who can ill afford to wear the full veil.

In Iran, the veil has been so much a part of common thinking and belief, so much honored as an integral part of a woman's appearance in public, that like the blue sky, it was considered normal, indispensable. Only in the mid-nineteenth century was veiling publicly challenged for the first time. An Iranian woman, a poet named Tahereh Qorratol 'Ayn (1817 – 1852), unveiled herself in 1848. Years later, in 1923, in another part of the Middle East, Huda Shaarawi and Saiza Nabarawi, upon their return from an international feminist meeting in Rome, appeared unveiled at the Cairo railway station. Four years later, Ambara Salaam (whose brother, Saeed Salaam, later became prime minister of Lebanon) appeared without her veil to speak at the Women's Renaissance Society in Beirut. She maintained that wearing the veil when speaking in public "hampered her and blocked her thoughts."³ Yet, in spite of over 150 years of struggle for the choice not to wear the veil, in spite of the compulsory unveiling act of 1936, unveiling remains a controversial, religious, social, political, and cultural issue to this day.

Milani clarifies although there is no simple cause-effect relationship between national literary traditions and the specific social and cultural context in which they develop and flourish, it is difficult to ignore a possible relationship between

the conspicuous lack of women writers in Iran and the institution of veiling. And although veiling cannot be considered the only obstacle to women's efforts to become writers, it has been a major one for centuries.

Significantly, the movement to unveil in Iran is associated with women's attempt to break into print as writers. Pioneering women writers unveiled both their bodies and their voices. Despite the obstacles presented by a culture that idealized women's silence, despite the anxieties of exposure and authorship, despite accusations of shamelessness and charmlessness, many women chose to write. They lifted the veil of secrecy to show many faces underneath. Soon, however, their unveiling became a sign of contamination; expression of an unleashed sexuality; proof of religious, sexual, and literary transgression. Women paid for their literal and literary unveiling dearly with loss of reputation, with allegations of immorality, promiscuity, lunacy, even heresy.

Thousands upon thousands of women had their feet mutilated and bound over several centuries in China. Large numbers of women were burned as widows in India and as witches in Europe and America; countless numbers were subjected to various forms of clitoridectomy, a practice predating Islam, in Africa and parts of the Middle East; their necks were elongated, their lips flattened, in Africa. Numerous women were treated harshly socially, psychologically, and clinically as hysterics in Europe. Untold Numbers of girls, in an internalized version of such mutilation, suffer from anorexia nervosa and

bulimia in the West. Paradoxically, the body of the Iranian woman has not undergone any such maiming. Iran has no known history of the above mutilations nor of officially sanctioned burying of female children upon birth, of chastity belts, steel pins, corsets, iron body locks, or gang rapes. Has the veil protected Iranian women, or on the contrary, has it been so restrictive that women never became enough of a threat to call for such large-scale punishments and radical countermeasures? Maybe muteness has been their mutilation, not a physical amputation but a verbal one.

In recent years, a major shift has occurred in the meaning of the veil, which no longer signifies women's segregation but, on the contrary, facilitates their access to the public arena, a means to renegotiate boundaries. The traditional equation of veiled / unvoiced / absent is not as clear or as immutable as it once was. Now a woman can be veiled and also have a public voice and presence.

A real revolution is, in fact, shaking the foundations of Iranian society, a revolution with women at its very centre. Veiled or unveiled, Iranian women are reappraising traditional spaces, boundaries, and limits. They are renegotiating old sanctions and sanctuaries. They are challenging male allocations of power, space, and resources. Exercising increasing control over how reality is defined, they are redefining their own status. It is in this context of the negotiations of boundaries that the veil is now worn by some women, not to segregate, but to desegregate.

The genealogy of this revolution can be traced back more than a century. Women writers, at the forefront of this movement, have consistently spoken the previously unspoken, articulated the once unarticulated. Their voices can be heard loud and clear in their literature. And the formerly silent, the supposedly invisible have discovered surprising resources in their reappropriated voices and presences and sheer dynamism of their mobility. In the words of Forough Farrokhzad:

Why should I stop, why?

The birds have gone off to find waterways

The horizon is vertical and moving is rocketing.

Shining planets spin

At the edge of sight

*Why should I stop, why?*⁴

(It Is Only the Voice That Remains,

Book 5: Let's Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season)

It is important to approach the works of women with awareness that many of their attitudes and preoccupations reflect and respond to these cultural and social realities. In fact, Farzaneh Milani in her mentioned book *Veils and Words, the Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, would argue that to avoid or deny, at this juncture in time, the issue of gender is to ignore an essential part of this literature's context as well as its contents. Awarred of the problems in female literary creativity, the novelist Shahrnush Parsipur (b.1946) places herself

squarely within an all-woman tradition. In this genealogy, suited to her needs and aspirations, she names not a single man. She makes for herself a female pedigree and draws nourishment and energy from it. “I write”, she says, “because I have a limited ancestry – Rabe’e Adaviyee [the eight-century Muslim saint], a few mystics, half-crazed, Tahereh Qorratol Ayn, Parivin Eteessami, Forough Farrokhzad, Simin Daneshvar, Simin Behbahani, and those of my own generation: Mahshid Amirshahi, Goli Tarraqi, Ghazaleh Alizadeh, Mihan Bahrami, and possibly a few others constitute the whole repertoire of my written or attempted literary tradition.”⁵

Recognizing gender, at this point in Iranian literary history, is a necessary critical perspective. Looking at the works of women writers as written by women is an act of compensation, a search for neglected features, an examination of misconceptions, omissions, sexually biased assumptions. It should not be construed as an attempt either to segregate women or to place them in a lower category. The refutation of double standards does not negate the consideration of gender in evaluating art. Furthermore, women, exactly because of their sex, have been systematically denied recognition for their various social initiatives.

The approach of Farzaneh Milani in her book, *Veils and Words, the Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers* is according to herself unabashedly gender oriented. Yet, Iranian literary women, if they have ever addressed the

issue, have frequently asserted their independence in their works from gender consideration. The prominent novelist Mahshid Amirshahi (b.1937) finds it even “silly” to classify literary works on the basis of the writer’s gender. In an introduction to a collection of short stories by Iranian women writers, she writes:

The truth is, that I find no difference between the creative works of men and women, and what is more I am not even after finding any. The sex of the author definitely does not figure among my criteria for choosing a book. Therefore, the division of literature on the basis of the writer’s gender appears to me extremely arbitrary, and to be frank quite silly, as a trying to classify literary works into ‘originally hand-written’ and ‘typed’, or produced by ‘ambidextrous’ and ‘left-handed’ authors. These divisions and subdivisions, which can go on eternally, do not interest me in the least.⁶

Even those women writers who have not refuted the importance of gender as a category of analysis and a determining factor in the creation of literary texts have requested, in no unequivocal terms, to be judged solely as authors. When Forough Farrokhzad was asked in an interview to address the issue of femininity in her poetry, she found it “quiet natural that a woman, due to her physical, psychological, and emotional characteristics, might perceive things differently than a man. She might have a feminine vision that is different from a man.”⁷

Having said that, however, she was quick to express resentment at being measured against a feminine rather than a more universal literary standard: “If my poetry, as you mentioned, has a certain air of femininity, it is obviously due to my being a woman. Fortunately, I am a woman. But if artistic standards are being evaluated, I think sex should no longer be a consideration. It is inappropriate to even raise such an issue.”⁸

The poet Simin Behbahani (b.1927) is no less opposed to considering women writers as a separate category. In an interview with the literary journal, *Doniya-ye Sokhan*, she said: “I suffer from this curtain that is drawn between men and women writers. If a poet is truly a poet, why should the issue of sex turn into a privilege? The arena of poetry is no wrestling ring in which sex and weight are criteria for categorization.”⁹

Another poet, one of the only two women ever admitted to the Iranian Cultural Academy, Tahereh Saffarzadeh (b.1939), goes even further and involves world imperialism in conspiratorial plans to classify her with other women poets when she says that “one of the vulgar tricks of the mercenaries of Imperialism was their propping up, every now and then, a certain literary woman beside me. I am sure, however, that historians and scholars of ‘independent’ art, even if it is after we’re gone, will consider my resistance through poetry superior to the men who claim all contemporary art as their province.”¹⁰

It is not surprising that given the social and symbolic constraints on women's self-expression, exceptionally few women could or perhaps even wanted to opt for breaking the ancestral silence; the contemporary poet Forough Farrokhzad could reiterate the same grievance. "I wanted to be a 'woman', that is to say a 'human being'. I wanted to say that I too have the right to breathe and to cry out. But others wanted to stifle and silence my screams on my lips and my breath in my lungs. They had chosen winning weapons, and I was unable to laugh anymore."¹¹ Or again, in a poem from the *Rebellion* collection, Farrokhzad writes:

*I was I, who laughed at futile slurs,
The one that was branded by shame
I shall be what I'm called to be, I said
But oh, the misery that 'woman' is my name.*¹²

(Bride of Acacias, *Book3: Rebellion*)

Literary history alleges that, with a few exceptions, upto the modern era only the educated women of court and the upper classes had a chance to develop their literary and public artistic potentials. With few other outlets to exercise their creative energies, such women resorted poetry. Out of the 107 poets of *From Rabe'e to Parvin*, an inclusive and reliable anthology of women poets in Iran, 43 are members of the court, and the rest belong almost entirely to the upper class. "Amazingly, 15 of these poetesses were wives and daughters of one king, Fath

Ali Shah of the Qajar dynasty. Perhaps he should be considered one of the earliest husbands in recorded Persian history to have encouraged his wives in their literary endeavors.”¹³

Poetry, out of all literary genres, proved to fit most closely to women’s circumstances and possibilities. Poetry is not only thoroughly integrated in Persian daily life, but it also produces and transmits in the privacy of the home without venturing into the social, economical, political, and public world barred to women. Perhaps poetry does not demand the uninterrupted time, concentration, and leisure required by other literary genres. Also, its highly stylized and formulaic nature makes it ideal for expressing the otherwise inexpressible. By no small coincidence has poetry been for so long the main vehicle for women’s literary creativity – in fact, until recently, their only acknowledged contribution to Persian literature.

Almost invisible upto a few decades ago in the mainstream of Persian literature, women have broken this spell of invisibility coincidentally with their attempts to unveil. Take, for example, the mid-nineteenth-century act of unveiling by Tahereh. Wanting to give body to her voice and voice to her body, Fatemeh Baraghani, better known as Tahereh Qorratol Ayn, publicly unveiled herself, as she unveiled her voice in her poetry. Tahereh used herself as text and context, as a medium through which to break out of the absence and the silence that concealed her culturally. Her act of unveiling and her poetry were assertions

of individuality and distinctiveness in an age that demanded conformity and anonymity from women.

But soon, women's unveiled voices and bodies became signs of contamination; expressions of unleashed sexuality; proofs of religious, sexual, and literary transgressions. Indeed, the exposure of the body of their writing, like exposure of their own bodies, proved to be costly enterprise. Women paid for their literary unveiling with reputations of immorality, promiscuity, even heresy. Struggling in isolation, they were locked behind bars as lunatics, driven to suicide, forced into exile.

Persian literature is not filled with the painful silences of women. We find in it, the voices of women who refused to be crucified on the cross of ideal femininity constructed for them by Iranian society and culture – women who declined to remain selfless to the point of extinction from the literary arena and who by demanding formal and authorized access to publish discourse, rebelled against the hegemonic figure of female selfhood; women who challenged patriarchal authorship and, through it, patriarchal authority; women whose works chronicle voices regained, but whose lives bear the scars of much suffering, conflict, and sorrow.

The price pioneering women writers paid for their transgression was very high. Tahereh Qorratol Ayn, the precursor of Iranian women's literary tradition, was charged with heresy and executed at the height of her creativity when she

was only thirty-six years of age. Parvin E'tessami, the first woman who published a poetry collection, died at the age of thirty-four of a mysterious typhoid fever. Taj-os Saltaneh, the first woman known to have written an autobiography, attempted suicide three times. The poet Zand-Dokht Shirazi died at the age of forty-three, an early death caused by overwork and mental depression. Forough Farrokhzad, a foremost poet who died in a car accident at the age of thirty-two, lived a life marked by bouts of severe depression, by nervous breakdowns, and by attempted suicide. She "ingested a container of Gordenol sleeping tablets. Her maid discovered her in time, and she was revived."¹⁴ The novelist Mahshid Amirshahi slashed her wrist. She, too, was discovered in time and lived to write about her attempted suicide in the short story entitled *After the Last Day*. In this autobiographical piece, Amirshahi talks for the first time about a woman's attempted suicide: "And even now I don't want to talk of that incident. It is still too soon. The stitches are not taken out yet and I feel pain and weakness. I might not talk about it later on either. Besides, what is there to talk about? Should I tell you how I tried to commit suicide but did not succeed? That's ridiculous. Suicide is a very heroic and beautiful act provided it is carried through. If one doesn't die it becomes ridiculous."¹⁵

Suicide for these women was ultimately an idiom of public defiance as well as an expression of individual despair. Other women writers in other parts of the world have also resorted to suicide. With her pockets full of rocks, Virginia Woolf drowned herself and her voice in a river. A few months later, in another

part of the world, disillusioned and embittered, Maria Tsvetaeva hanged herself in the Russian countryside. In still some other corner, another poet, Sylvia Plath, fatigued and frustrated, stuck her head and her creative energies in an oven. Anne Sexton drove into her garage, closed the door, and left the motor running. And thus have many women writers committed their ultimate act of insurgency and authored their own deaths.

Perhaps one can consider pioneering women writers as social and cultural mutants and take cognizance of the fact that not all mutants survive. But even if women survived, their struggle for identity as writers entailed a life of continuous rebellion against stereotypes of women's place in both society and literature. Often, the woman who takes her creativity seriously is no longer the woman who renounces her art in favour of her family. Accountants of the lives of contemporary women writers in Iran, as well as their writing, attest the feelings of sadness, anxiety, dislocation, loneliness, and guilt associated with this renunciation of traditional roles as wives and mothers. Whatever else they are about, their literature portrays, with terrifying consistency, the perils of writing.

The lives and works of contemporary women writers in Iran depict the tension and frequent paralysis that result from confronting such conflicts. But nowhere in Persian literature this conflict is more fully explored than in the poetry of Forough Farrokhzad. The agonizing dilemmas of the woman artist, the

conflicts between a woman's creative urge and her femininity are dramatized in all five of her poetry collections.

In *The Captive*, Farrokhzad explores the nature and the magnitude of the problems she faces as a woman and a poet. If she denies her poetic impulses, she does not live up to her own standards and ideals. If she pursues her poetic career, she is not living up to the traditional female roles. In many of the poems of this collection, Farrokhzad depicts this split within herself between the poet who defines herself only through her relationships with others, especially her husband and her son.

Every morning from behind the bars

My child's eyes smile at me

As I begin happily to sing,

His kissing lips near mine

O God! If I need to fly out one day

From behind these lonesome bars

How will I answer this child's crying eyes?

*Let me be, a captive bird am I!*¹⁶

(The Captive, Book 1: The Captive)

Slowly and painfully, the devoted artist triumphs. The poet resolves the duality of commitments and decides to pursue a poetic career. Neither doubts, nor fears, nor ingrained beliefs in, nor nostalgia for the comforts of dependent

femininity stops her from making poetry her vocation. In one of the last poems of *The Captive*, Farrokhzad explicitly acknowledges her determination fully to dedicate her life to poetry:

I know happiness has been driven

Form that distant house

I know a weeping child mourns

His mother's loss.

Yet, fatigued and despaired

I set off on a road of hope,

Poetry is my love, my lover

I leave here to go to it.¹⁷

(The Deserted House, Book 1: *The Captive*)

From this point onward, after her revolt against the roles and the rules she found stultifying, Farrokhzad presents her choice of a poetic career as a sacrifice to the bloodthirsty Goddess of poetry, a submission to forces stronger than herself. The lack of options, mainly of an option that would allow her to reconcile home and family with a poetic career, causes much pain for the young poet. The poem entitled, *Offering* is an eloquent expression of the sacrifices a poet has to make to tend her art:

You seem quiet oblivious of the sufferings

You've inflicted upon your disciple

You instilled your love in her
And tore her apart from everything else.

Other than these two tearful eyes,
What have you left me? Tell me!
O poetry – bloodthirsty Goddess –
*Stop. Enough sacrifices.*¹⁸

(Offering, Book 2: *The Wall*)

The high price she has paid to tend her poetic impulses occupies the foreground of Farrokhzad's poetry and agonizes her to her last days. The poem *Green Delusion* is undoubtedly one of the most eloquent statements of the sacrifices she had to make for her art. It is an intense and agitated poem, an excruciating evocation of a woman who knows only too well that the price she has paid for her success has been her most valuable emotional bond. It is the tormented cry of a woman who, despite passionate involvement with her profession and despite the recognition accorded her writing, is still left with a barren feeling. It is the embodiment of a yearning for the life of all "simple whole women" whose singleness of commitment saves them from the agony of ambivalence, guilt, or loneliness. It is the agonized expression of failed femininity, linked to home and mothering. The poem is striking enough to warrant quoting in full.

*I wept all day to my mirror
Spring had given my window away
to the green delusion of trees
how cramped I was in my cocoon alone
my crown of paper mildewed
and polluting the air of that sunless realm*

*I couldn't anymore, I couldn't
Street sounds, birdsong
tennis balls bounding away
flurry of children fleeing
balloons bobbing, climbing
like soap bubbles
to the tips of their branches of string
and through ancient clefts in my fortress of silence
whose walls securely hemmed me in
the wind called my heart by its name
panting as though sunk in love's deepest, darkest moment*

*All day my gaze
lay locked in my life's gaze
those two anxious, fearful eyes
avoiding my unflinching gaze*

like liars hiding

behind the safe solitude of their lids

What peak, and what heights?

Don't all these winding paths

converge and close

in that sucking, frozen mouth?

What, oh you seductive words, what have you given me

and you, oh renunciation of bodies and desire?

If I'd fixed a flower in my hair

wouldn't it have been more charming than this fraud,

this paper crown already moldering on my head?

But I was led away by the desert spirit

drawn from the flock's faith by the magic of the moon

In my half-grown heart the void grew

and no other half was joined to this half

So I stood, and so I saw

the ground vanishing beneath my own two feet

and no warmth from my body's mate

pierced the wan vigil of my body

What peak, and what heights?

Give me sanctuary, O anxious lamps

and O you bright, doubting houses

*where laundry sways in the arms of your fragrant smoke on
sunlit roofs*

Give me sanctuary, O you simple whole women

whose fingers delicately trace

the fetus turning

deliciously

and in whose opened blouses the air

forever mingles with the scent of new milk

What peak, and what heights?

Give me sanctuary, O glowing hearths – O horseshoe talismans –

And O, copperware in the kitchen's smudging work

and O, somber purring of the sewing machine

and O, endless campaigns of carpets and brooms

Give me sanctuary, O all you loves insatiable

whose throbbing lust for eternity bedecks the beds in which

you are possessed

by magic water

and drops of fresh blood

All day all day long

forsaken, as a drowned corpse forsaken

I marched towards that greatest of rocks

towards the caverns below the deepest sea

and the most fleshrending of fish
and my backbone's frail disks groaned
sensing death

I couldn't anymore, I couldn't
My steps echo on the denying way
despair vaster than my spirit can endure
And Spring, that delusion coloured green
passing the window, says to my heart,
Behold,
you never went on
*you were drawn down*¹⁹

(Green Delusion, Book 4: Another Birth)

“Alone and lonely, her vision caged in the vastness of a mirror, transformed by the bitterness of dreams become nightmares, a woman – also a poet – feels terrorized in this poem. In her cocoon of loneliness, her sense of success turns into failure. Overwhelmed by an agonizing feeling of emptiness, transfixed, and immobilized, she has no safe place to run away to. The transparency of her nightmares has invaded every inch of the mirror and, with it, the most inaccessible hiding places of her mind. She cannot seek refuge in oblivion, in lies, in deceits, in denials, behind the safe solitude of her eyelids. Kept awake by the glaring eyes of the mirror, she cannot take shelter in dreams. Surveying her life, going from room to room, from memory to memory, from experience to

experience, she finds herself empty-handed.

When looks in the mirror, she sees the face of a lonely woman looking back at her – two large eyes that stay open, see too much, and refuse to lie; two open eyes that pour out tears all day long and still cannot wash away the pain. This colossal pain stares back at her like the blinding sun, a pain so terrible that no kind mirror should ever remember it. But who said mirrors have to be kind? You look at them for too long and they open up old wounds – wounds that had closed in on themselves to alleviate the pain; wounds that, through layers upon layers of forgetfulness, had covered what was hidden underneath. That is the way it is with mirrors.

Under the dislocating influences of such a revealing and unkind mirror, in the harsh clarity of its spring-filled surface, nature's rejuvenation stirs up in this lonely woman the torrential enumerations of pent-up nostalgias. In the ritual marriage of the new year with the new sun, with herself in front of a mirror like a woman during her wedding ritual, she has to witness the absence of her 'other half'. She is a bride without the groom: only half of what she considers an entity. With the onset of spring and the Iranian New Year, in the season of birth and growth, she has to listen to her barrenness finding voice in the silence of the mirror. Loneliness blossoms all around her like spring flowers. Solitude buds. Sorrow burgeons. Silence, the hollow and long-lasting echo of the silence surrounding her, lingers in her ears and contrasts sharply with the reverberations

of sounds coming from children playing in the street. Walled in, she watches the draining out of hope, the terror of illusions gone sour, the murder of dreams.”²⁰

Regarding Farzaneh Milani’s view in her book *Veils and Words, the Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers, Green Delusion* is a window thrown open to spring but also to the miseries of a woman poet. Although a hymn to motherhood, to woman’s body as a source of nurturance and creativity, the whole poem resounds with frightful contradictions and contrasts: an inner autumnal melancholy against an outer regenerative spring, forces to song against silence, gestation against decay, success against failure. Here, in this mirror, a poet’s long-cherished dreams are slain by facts. Here, in this jungle of regrets and retributions, a woman has to surrender to shattered ideals. Silent and listless, she has to awaken to the bitter reality of her betrayed dreams, the sacrifices she has to make, the loneliness she has to face. Trapped in the cocoon of her own making, all she can do is cry all day to her mirror.

Was Farrokhzad, the poet or the poetic personae, asking for too much? Was it because she demanded something so spectacular, so much larger than life, so inaccessible, that she needed to cry all day to her mirror, experience nervous breakdowns and attempt suicide? Milani in her book continues that apparently all Forough Farrokhzad wanted and could never accomplish was the joys and comforts of family life and complete fulfillment of her talents. In contrast, in reading more than a thousand years of Persian literature, “I have rarely come

across men who have complained of the clash of their commitments between being a husband and a father and an artist. A man can choose marriage, fatherhood, and art. Women have not traditionally had such an option.”²¹

Farrokhzad tried hard to define for herself a new life as a woman and ended up paying dearly for her attempt. Her frustration is shared by other women artists inside and outside Iran. In *Fear of Flying*, Erica Jong writes:

*I would roam through the Metropolitan Museum of Art looking for one woman artist to show me the way. Mary Cassatt? Berthe Morisot? Why was it that so many women artists who had renounced having children could then paint nothing but mothers and children? It was hopeless. If you were female and talented, life was a trap no matter which way you turned. Either you drowned in domesticity (and has Walter Mittyish fantasies of escape) or you longed for domesticity in all your art. You could never escape your femaleness. You had conflicts written in your very blood.*²²

Not that Forough Farrokhzad regarded maternity as the only destiny for women. She never viewed art as a liberation from the demands of motherhood or as an incomplete substitute for it. She rejected the notion that giving birth is the hidden generator of woman's creativity. She did defend, however, the rights of motherhood, childbearing, and child rearing when they are a woman's choice.

Farzaneh Milani sums up, “despite the obstacles presented by a society that

identified woman as wife and mother and idealized her invisibility and voicelessness, despite the anxieties of exposure and authorship, despite psychological dilemmas and cultural dislocations, despite accusations of shamelessness and charmlessness, toward the middle of the nineteenth century a tradition of women writers came to be established in Iran. Self-defining and self-articulating women such as Tahereh Qorratol Ayn, Parvin Etessami, Forough Farrokhzad, and Simin Daneshvar lifted the veil of secrecy to show many faces of reality underneath.

The tradition of women's writing in contemporary Iran is thus one of the radical dissent and questioning. It is the chronicle of an evolving consciousness, the testament of efforts to make lives according to new values and standards. It is the cries of mutinous women who suffered for their mutiny. Full appreciation of the problems these women confronted and the terrible odds against which they attempted to write reveals the strength and the value of their literary achievements. Perhaps that is why many Iranian women have rejected the possibility that their works can be understood in isolation from their restricting contexts – the hardships, sufferings, and anxieties that have dominated their lives. Simin Daneshvar, for instance, emphatically maintains that “even the few writings we have produced are an accomplishment. Let Simone de Beauvoir come and live for a year the life I live and if she can still produce one line of writing I'll change my name.”²³

Although the path has been strenuous, the agonies and ambiguities that accompany change many; the rewards have been equally handsome. There is finally a tradition of women writers in Iran not only because there are a considerable number of authors and texts but also because there is a lineage. Women writers need no longer be compared to or evaluated in terms of an all-male community; they have a predecessor, a foremother, a legitimate and legitimized ancestry. They are no longer exiled from public life, either. If previously they could not speak in any public forum because both the content of any such speech and the act of oration itself would have been considered a transgression, even a sin, now they can articulate the previously unarticulated, name the once unnamed. Women, the ideally silent characters, have finally discovered surprising resources in their reappropriated voices and visions.

“Women have literally transformed Persian literature in less than 150 years. They have desegregated a predominantly all-male tradition. They have reappraised cultural norms and patterns on a very intimate level. By achieving public and creative expression, they have delivered men from ceaseless soliloquies. Although men have lost exclusive control over public discourse, over the ability to define, categorize, and judge, they have, through women, gained access to dialogue.

Perhaps it is true that in a traditionally sex-segregated society women know far more about the world of men than vice versa. On the simplest level, men are

raised by women. Furthermore, hidden behind their veils, women can have some access to men's world, whereas the opposite is not true. Also, men talk more or less openly to their mothers and sisters, whereas women have other women as their confidants and preferred interlocutors. For centuries, a cloak of secrecy excluded men from the private world of women. The female side of experience was like a terra incognita in Persian literature. Women writers have produced a key to unlock this riddle. The well-kept secret is finally being divulged. A woman is no longer the enigma she used to be, the veiled mystery, unknown and unknowable.

Indeed, the tradition of women writers in Iran is the chronicle of a presence asserted and inserted, of a body reclaimed, of a voice regained. It is the record of women's struggle to gain access to autonomous subjectivity, to become the speaking as well as the spoken subject. It is the rebirth of a sort. It is an attempt by women writers to establish dialogues with themselves, with other women, and with men."²⁴

O friend, O brother, O blood of my blood

.....

Speak to me

What does the one who offers you

The kindness of a living body

Ask it return

Save a sense of life?

Speak to me

In my window's sanctuary

*I'm joined to the sun.*²⁵

(Window, Book 5: *Let's Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season*)

3.3. Thematic Analysis of Forough Farrokhzad's Poems

Forough Farrokhzad was born on January 5, 1935, in a large family, the third of seven children. After graduating from junior high school, she transferred to a technical school to study painting and sewing. She never finished high school. She was sixteen when she married Parviz Shapur, a distant relative, the grandson of her mother's maternal aunt. Unlike her predecessors, Tahereh Qorratol Ayn and Parvin Etessami with their arranged marriage, Forough Farrokhzad married a man with whom she had fallen in love. A year later, their first and only child was born, a boy named Kamyar. Farrokhzad's first collection, entitled *The Captive*, appeared in 1955. It contains forty-four poems and tells the story of a frustrated woman and her sense of the limitations of her life. The very title of the collection indicates her feeling of entrapment and despair. The poetic persona of *The Captive* is a confused young woman who has a hard time forging an identity for herself. She is caught between the seemingly irreconcilable demands of a woman-wife-mother and an autonomous poet.

I think about it and yet I know

I'll never be able to leave this cage

even if the warden should let me go
I've lost the strength to fly away.

Every morning from behind the bars
my child's eye smile at me
as I start to sing his kissing lips near mine.

God, if need to fly one day
from behind these silent bars,

how will I answer this child's wet eyes?

*Let me be, I am a captive bird!*²⁶

(The Captive, Book 1: The Captive)

After three years of marriage, Farrokhzad decided to leave her husband despite the numerous social, psychological, and financial hardships that would result. With much pain and grief, she lost the permanent custody of her only child and was even denied visiting rights. In September 1955, she suffered a nervous breakdown and was taken to a psychiatric clinic, where she remained a patient for a month. A year later, in 1956, her second poetry collection, *The Wall*, was published, dedicated to her former husband “in memory of our shared past, and with the hope that this worthless gift of mine can be a token of my gratitude to his boundless kindness.”²⁷ In less than a year, her third book, *The Rebellion*, appeared and securely established her as a promising yet notorious, poet. Throughout the poems of these two collections, totalling forty-two, one notices a much stronger and more sustained sense of the poet's autonomy. She

bitterly criticizes her society, especially its injustices against women. A sense of outrage and anger provides the impetus for the writing of many of the poems from this period.

Farrokhzad had many claims on her talent and energy. Barely twenty-four, with three poetry collections to her credit, she developed new interests in cinematography, acting, and producing. In 1962, she made a documentary movie about a leper's colony, entitled *The House is Black*. The movie was acclaimed internationally and won several prizes. Meanwhile, her fourth poetry collection, *Another Birth*, was published in 1964. With the intimate and the personal as an ever-present background, *Another Birth* celebrates the birth of a female character who rejoices in her new options, a warrior who has fought for every step in her path to freedom. She becomes her own model and gives birth to a self in the image of her own likings and aspirations. Her rebirth is indeed a self-rebirth.

*I know a sad little nymph
who lives in the sea
and plays the wooden flute of her heart
tenderly, tenderly
Sad little nymph
dying at night of a kiss
and by a kiss reborn each day.*²⁸

At the height of her creativity and barely thirty-two, Farrokhzad died of head injuries in a car accident on February 13, 1967. Trying to avoid an oncoming vehicle, she struck a wall and was thrown from her car. Ironically, this woman who escaped and avoided walls for a lifetime was eventually killed by one, killed at a time when she claimed to have finally found herself. She was buried beneath the falling snow:

*Perhaps the truth was those young pair of hands
 those young pair of hands buried beneath the falling snow
 and next year, when Spring
 mates with the sky beyond the window
 and stems thrust from her body
 fountains of fragile green stems
 will blossom, o my love, o my dearest only love.*²⁹

(Let's Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season,
Book 5: Let's Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season)

At thirty-two, Farrokhzad had produced four poetry collections, had won fame and awards, and had “grey hair and two large wrinkles in her forefront in between the eyebrows.”³⁰ But above all, and in her own words, she “had found herself”³¹ – only to lose herself forever. This incompleteness strikes one in the life of Farrokhzad. Like a dream cut short by wakefulness, her life and her art, characterized by a breathtaking dynamism and mobility, are stamped with the finality of a premature death. She never saw the publication of her fifth

collection, *Let's Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season*, which was published posthumously.

The whole canon of Farrokhzad's poetry can be considered, with modifications, as a kind of *Bildungsroman*. Though a genre of novel, and though its tradition is almost exclusively associated with young male characters, *Bildungsroman* best embodies Farrokhzad's emergence from cultural conditioning and her struggle to come to self-realization, warranting its adaptation to her journey and to her awakening. Her five books constitute the account of an apprenticeship to life, a personal history of growth and change. Farrokhzad explores and ultimately defies the traditional limits for a woman's life that seem to make *Bildungsroman* more suited to a male protagonist. For this literary genre, even in the West, has been an almost exclusively male affair. Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, Flaubert's *Education Sentimentale*, Dicken's *David Copperfield*, Joy's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, are all typical apprenticeship novels with sensitive protagonists who attempt to acquire a philosophy of life and to activate their powers and their potentialities. Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, and June Arnold's *Applesauce*, among a few others, are rare exceptions to this general rule.

Men have found themselves an ever-changing, dynamic reality. Mobility, in its literal and metaphorical sense, has been their prerogative. Religion, philosophy, and literature have provided them with numerous role models.

Women, on the other hand, have been assigned traditionally static rather than dynamic roles. Farrokhzad rejects this immobility. Her poetry is the chronicle of an evolving consciousness, the testament of a growing awareness. It enriches the heritage of Persian poetry with the portrayal of a dynamic woman character whose definition of self cannot be restricted to relationships or to love plots, a character who transcends sex roles by discovering and defining herself, freed from preconceived suppositions and expectations.

Farrokhzad also presents the voice of the Other in modern Persian literature. By speaking as a woman, she literally creates an-other voice. If Parvin Eteessami inscribes women's stories in public, Farrokhzad goes through the stories to the storyteller herself. If Eteessami tries to include women's everyday concerns in poetry, Farrokhzad attempts to reconcile the sensuous, emotional, and physical dimensions of a female self with her literary presentation. If Eteessami literally effaces men, Farrokhzad uncovers them. Indeed, throughout her poetry, she puts herself as well as her vision of men into the text and contradicts prevailing notions of the feminine and the masculine. She is neither silent nor concealed, neither chaste nor immobile. She refuses to suffer and not complain. She does not endure restrictions and prohibitions with fortitude. She does not condemn self-gratification. She does not consider it improper to talk publically about men. She plays out her story, including her relations with men, on the literary scene. She laughs and cries in public and shares her many pains and pleasures with total strangers – her readers.

From the beginning of her career, Farrokhzad refused to evade her feelings. Her poetry reveals the problems of a modern Iranian woman with all her conflicts, painful oscillations, and contradictions. It enriches the world of Persian poetry with its depiction of the tension and frequent paralysis touching the lives of those women who seek self-expression and social options in a culture not entirely accustomed to them. It explores the vulnerability of a woman who rejects unreflective conformity with the past and yet suffers from uncertainties about future. Quite simply, it embraces the daily reality of the emergent Persian woman.

Farrokhzad's poetry is an oasis of the conventionally forbidden: textual and sexual. From first to last, her poems, in spite of their varying content and form, have certain rebelliousness in common. They portray an iconoclast making her 'self', not all made and finished by men; an uncompromising, unaccommodating sort of woman; the kind that would rather break than sway with breeze.

But it is not only the woman portrayed in Farrokhzad's poetry who is unconventional. Her men, too, break their conventional moulds. They are no longer determined or confined by roles traditionally assigned to their gender. They are not so tightly wrapped in their masculinity as to be forced to hide their own needs and desires. No other Persian woman has offered a more detailed, individualized portrayal of men.

Virginia Woolf believed that “women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size.”³² Perhaps in the West it is so but not in Iran, at least certainly not in Iranian literature. Before Farrokhzad’s poetry, reflections of men, let alone “delicious” and enlarged ones, barely exist in women’s writing in Iran. Wrapped in their cloaks of obscurity or reduced to abstract representations, the men whom women have traditionally written about lack uniqueness or characterological complexity. They are deprived of real emotions or expressions of unmanly pleasure or pains. They are captives of a cultural canon of masculine image and archetype. They are cardboard characters lacking depth, replaceable with each other in their flatness. They are, in effect, veiled. The only man who makes his individualized appearance in Parvin Etessami’s poetry, for instance, is her father, to whom she dedicates a eulogy.

O father, death’s axe struck its grave blow.

By that same as my life’s tree was fallen.

Your name was Yussef; they delivered him up to the wolf.

Death was your wolf, O my Josef of Canaan.

*Moon you were in the firmament of letters; earth now is your abode,
the grave your prison, O my imprisoned moon.*

Thievish Fate took me unawares.

It stole you away, and grins now impishly at my ignorance.

*He who bedded you down in the earth,
would that he could settle my unsettled life.*

Your grave I visit and see that blessed epitaph.

Woe is I! That inscription tells my destiny.

You departed and left my days blacker than night.

Without you, I grope in darkness, O my shining eyes!

Without you tears, sorrow, regret are my guests.

Take pity, father, honour me at my banquet.

*My face I hide from all eyes,
lest they read on it the lines of my distress.*

.....

I was your singing bird, what happened

That you no longer listen to my song?

You called me your treasure. Why did you desert me and go?

O I wonder, who after you will be my protector?³³

(Divan)

But although Iranian men have traditionally been denied a glimpse of themselves in female literary looking glasses, mirrors have been in their own

hands. For several centuries, they had the virtual monopoly of literary representation, including self-representation. The pulpit, the pen, the brush, the chisel, the camera – all were under their control. Furthermore, in a sexually segregated society, a woman's knowledge of men is partial and somehow hampered. Although men's power was partially based on their social visibility, their symbolic power derived, it seems, from their physical inaccessibility to female representation. And although they were burdened by the heavy load of their masculinity, they did not encourage female representation of themselves; they were unwilling to be stripped of their empowering veil of masculinity. After all, woman having been readily considered the inferior sex, it remained for the superior party to tenaciously prove and safeguard his superiority.

Through the centuries, the Iranian man has been imprisoned in and empowered by patterns of manliness. He has not been encouraged to communicate or disclose his inner thoughts and feelings nor to see his reflection in the Other's eye. Traditionally, his silence has been the voice of authority, one that speaks all the more powerfully because it does not necessarily have to speak. Others, especially women, have to decipher his muted messages, respect them, honour them, and acquire the skills to decode them.

Such a cultural scene, with its various forms of physical and symbolic barriers between the two sexes, does not seem to be a proper place for the development of realistic portrayal of men by women or for that matter of

realistic women by men. And indeed few women, and those only recently, have opted for breaking the ancestral silence.

In Farrokhzad's poetry, man is stripped of this veil of mystery. He is presented in his all-too-human frailties and contradictions. At times, he is represented in exaggerated conformity to his own codes of masculinity. He is mystified, terrorized by signs of emotions, softness, and nurturing. He tries so hard to be a man that he becomes a caricature of masculinity. Full of pretences, he is addicted to approval. Intense anxiety and vulnerability lurk behind his façade of strength. He is "unfaithful", "egoistical", an "oppressor", and a "warden". A physical creature, he follows erotic instincts and retreats from intimacy. His capacity to shift his affections according to the moment disappoints the woman who asks for an emotional commitment to match her own. Farrokhzad writes:

*He was taught nothing but desire
interested in nothing but appearances
wherever he went, they whispered in his ears
woman is created for your desire.*³⁴

(A Bitter Story, Book 1: The Captive)

Flawed relationships, failed love affairs, and disintegrating unions fill page after page of Farrokhzad's poetry. The lover and the beloved, the oppressor and the oppressed, the bird and the bird jailer, to borrow Forough's own metaphor in

the title poem of *The Captive*, both prove to suffer from their internalizations of prescribed roles. Master or slave, victor or victim, predator or prey, man or woman, each experiences his or her own brand of disillusionment and dissatisfaction.

At other times, the poet represents man as freed from masculine stereotypes and clichés. She portrays him with a distinctive individuality and physical presence. No longer a phantom personality, a dream, a figment of imagination, no longer a Prince Charming of the wildest fantasies, a prisoner of silence or invisibility, constricted in his emotional expression, no longer compromised in his capacity for intimacy, Farrokhzad gives this man new life by giving him clearer focus. After centuries of posing as the lover, man finally becomes the beloved. In the following poem, entitled *My Beloved*, an interesting reversal of gender bound representation occurs.

My beloved

is wildly free

like a healthy instinct

in the heart of a deserted island

he wipes the street-dust

off his shoes

with strips torn from Majnun's tent

My beloved

like the god of a Nepales shrine

has been innocent from the start

he is a man of bygone centuries

a reminder of beauty's truth

He always awakens

like a baby's smell

innocent memories around him

he is like a happy, popular song

brimming with feelings and nakedness

He sincerely loves

life's atoms

specks of dust

human sorrows

pure sorrows

He sincerely loves

a country garden-lane

a tree

a dish of ice-cream

a clothesline

My beloved

is a simple man

a simple man
I have hidden
in between my breasts
like the last relic of a wondrous religion
*in this ominous land of wonders.*³⁵

(My Beloved, *Book 4: Another Birth*)

The “beloved” in this poem transcends sexual roles ascribed by literary tradition. Majnun, the most stereotyped hero of classical literature, represents the perpetuation of a destructive romantic idealism. He can no longer serve as a role model. The “beloved” wipes the dust off his shoes with rags of Majnun’s tent. If Majnun had to remain the lover, he would become the beloved. If Majnun went mad from his frustrated love, he would grow in his love. He stretches himself and breaks down barriers. He does not need to be self-contained, in charge of himself and his surroundings. Neither remote nor given solely to thoughts rather than emotions, he can show pain and pleasure. He can love a “dish of ice-cream”, be “full of feelings”, and be “free”. To borrow one of Farrokhzad’s own metaphors, he can be “brimming with nakedness.” He can be the “beloved.”

Rarely a spectator of his own desirability, man is finally desired in a female-authored text. The Poem entitled *The Sin*, one of Farrokhzad’s best-known and most widely anthologized early poems, epitomizes one such unprecedented expression of female desire. In this passionately sensual love poem, a passion

both painful and delightful, a radical change occurs not only in the traditional notion of the boundaries of poetic content for a woman but also in the conventional heterosexual relationship.

Beside a body, tremulous and dazed

I sinned, I voluptuously sinned.

O God! How could I know what I did

in that dark retreat of silence?

In that dark retreat of silence

I looked into his mysterious eyes

my heart trembled restlessly

at the pleading in his eyes.

In that dark retreat of silence

I sat, disheveled, beside him

passion poured from his lips into mine

saved I was from the agony of a foolish heart.

I whispered the tale of love in his ears:

I want you, O sweetheart of mine

I want you, O life-giving bosom

I want you, O mad lover of mine.

Passion struck a flame in his eyes

the red wine danced in the glass

in the soft bed, my body

shivered drunk on his breast.

I sinned, I voluptuously sinned

in arms hot and fiery

I sinned in his arms

*iron-strong, hot, and avenging.*³⁶

(The Sin, Book 2: The Wall)

There are violations of many codes in this poem, subversions of power and propriety. Linguistically, the poem violates norms that define proper language for a woman. Woman – the respectable kind – would not openly address such sexual issues. “To express passion for one of us women,” complains one of Tahereh Saffarzadeh’s heroines, “is considered so repulsive and hideous that our desires suffocate under the bell jar of pointless prohibitions.”³⁷ Even if a woman treats sensual themes at all, she would do it allusively, through metaphors or under the cover of symbols, games, songs. But Farrokhzad’s poems is intense and to the point. Its sexuality is not camouflaged by formulas, allusions, metaphors, symbols. It thrills in its directness and intensity. Its explicit imagery discourages multiple readings. This poem is not an allegory in which erotic love signifies love of God. Love here is human, not divine. Unlike most traditional love poems, it does not make extra textual pronouncements. Its very title, *The*

Sin, suggests rejection of euphemism. It represents a self-assertiveness quiet different from the self-effacing virtuousness of the ideal woman. *The Sin* is the abandonment not only of body to passion but also of pen to tabooed expression. If this poet's sexual impulses cannot be contained within traditional boundaries, neither can her poetry. The adventurer in life becomes the adventurer in language.

Farrokhzad, like other women, was taught that to succumb to the desires of her body is to condemn herself to everlasting notoriety in this world and to hellfire in the other. Farrokhzad does not eventually surrender to fear or shame. She breaks through the cultural barrier of experiencing and expressing, even if with much awe and confusion, feminine lust. Caught between two equally imperative and irreconcilable drives – fear and feelings of guilt on the one hand and the demands of passionate body on the other – she chooses less and less to be ruled by the first. Her poetic persona indulges in what women were not allowed to do or express in public. She also subverts the sexual act. It is, for instance, only the prerogative of the man to choose his partner and to display his desire. He is neither chosen nor can he expect much display of sexual enjoyment from a woman who knows too well that to show interest in a man is improper behaviour. It would not be exaggerating to say there are many Iranian women, including Farrokhzad herself in some of her early poems, who truly believe that once they prove their total interest in and desire for a man, they have lost him for good.

*You, with a sincere heart, woman
don't seek loyalty in a man
he does not know the meaning of love
don't ever tell him your heart's secrets.*³⁸

(Exhausted, *Book 1: The Captive*)

Sexual misconduct for a woman has been traditionally synonymous with total ethical lapse. Even male honour depends, to a large extent, on the chastity of his womenfolk. The worst accusation brought against a woman and, by extension, against her male kin is to associate her with illicit sexual behaviour. But in the poem, *The Sin*, a woman publically announces both her sexual misconduct and, worse yet, her enjoyment of it. Freed from false pretences or strategic manoeuvring, she allows her feelings to express themselves freely. She gives voice to her passion. She initiates it, enjoys it, and even basks in it. She refuses to be only the object of desire. She feels triumphant in her ability to transform the “dark retreat of silence” to a flame of passion. She generates desire and takes pride in it. She further dramatizes her own desire by her persistent use of the first person singular throughout the poem. Indeed, the poem's autobiographical tone makes it exceptionally forthcoming in its expression of forbidden experiences and feelings of lust.

A curious poem this is, firm in its depiction of pleasure, daring in its revelation, yet confused in its feeling. It conveys delight mingled with guilt and

doubt. Conventions struggle with passion. It is the tale of a woman frightened by the flowering of her passion but also fascinated by it. She may talk freely about her unconventional sexual experiences, but she considers them ‘sin’ and herself a ‘sinner’. The dominant standards and values of her society, although somehow disregarded, are absorbed by her in a subtle and inescapable way. Contradictory aspirations make her an intriguing blend of certainties and doubts. On the one hand, there are the burning flames of a body and a mind. On the other hand, there are the limiting social norms and sanctions, internalized. She can neither deny herself the privilege of listening to her adventuresome mind and heart nor can she free herself from what she has been taught in regard to self-respect and morality. She vacillates between two sets of values and aspirations, the old and the new, unable to relinquish or to integrate two.

Bind my feet in chains again

so that tricks and deceits won't make me fall

so that colourful temptations

*won't bind me with yet another chain.*³⁹

(Comeback, *Book 1: The Captive*)

Throughout the first three collections, Forough Farrokhzad calls herself a ‘sinner’, ‘notorious’, ‘a foolish woman’, and ‘undependable’. Public opinion and her own internalized value system do not paralyze her, but they afflict her nonetheless. She becomes bitter and alienated, overcome by a need for

seclusion.

*I shun these people
who seem so sincere and friendly
and yet, in an excess of contempt
charge me with countless accusations.*

*I shun these people who listen to my poems
and bloom like sweet-smelling flowers
but in their own privacy
call me a notorious fool.*⁴⁰

(Fugitive, Book 1: *The Captive*)

Not only duplicitous readers condone and condemn Farrokhzad, her supporters also show ambivalence. If she believes herself to be a ‘sinner’, even her most staunch advocate considers her a sinner, too. In the introduction to Farrokhzad’s own poetry collection, Shoja’ed-Din Shafa apologetically reminds the reader: “The artistic confession of a woman and her ability to candidly portray her feelings are, I believe, what is truly new and interesting in this lady’s poetry. Otherwise, the subject matter of these poems is nothing new per se to deserve commotion. It is a tale as old as man himself is and shall remain with him until his very end. And let’s face, which one of us can deny having felt these unspeakable desires in our own hearts? In the words of Jesus, ‘let he who has no sin cast the first stone at the sinner.’”⁴¹

What is truly new and interesting in Farrokhzad's poetry is actually much more than her ability to candidly portray her unspeakable desires. Perhaps what commands both attention and admiration among so many readers has something to do with the emergence of a significant poetic female character whose complexities defy easy categorization. What sets her apart from her predecessors and even from her contemporary women writers is her rendering of quotidian experience with no intention to guide, to educate, to lead. Hers was the subversive, the innovative text, not only in its language, technique, or point of view but also in its subject matter. The candour of these poems might allure readers unaccustomed to such frank self-revelation. The continuously reweaved webs of passion and love depicted in them might provide a cathartic release for what voluptuousness offers and puritanical morality withholds from many of her readers. Her simultaneous portrayal of the thrill of being free and fetterless and the anxiety and uncertainties attached to it might eloquently speak of confusion that in many of her readers remains unarticulated. Indeed, far from being a personal history, this poetry is an accurate portrayal of the pain and pleasure of a whole generation undergoing radical change.

Liberated from conventional sex-stereotyped modes of thoughts and emotions, committed to the expansion of their possibilities and potentials, man and woman celebrate reciprocity in this poetry. Aware of the many limitations imposed upon them in the name of masculinity or femininity, they seek, and to a certain extent achieve, liberation.

Farrokhzad learns and reveals more about herself through her attempt to mirror the other. Her act of unveiling man is far more of a violation of feminine norms than the hackneyed image of gratified desire. Her curiosity about the real that lies behind the veil, whether it expresses itself in sexual imagery or not (and is not it instead a reflection of those very checks and curbs placed upon her by society that censor and restrict and judge her in whispers and smiles and acknowledged notoriety? Is not it because of these impediments that she is compelled to express her act of unveiling the Other in sexual terms?), this thirst for and courageous desire for the naked truth leads her, finally, to a place of infinite loneliness and honesty: the homeland of all good poets. No wonder she needs to create, through poetry, her own utopic space.

The poem entitled *Conquest of Garden* is perhaps Farrokhzad's most elegant and engaging reappraisal of some of the deeply held norms of her society. It attempts radical reformulation of ideas, relationships, and norms. It is the mythopoetic enterprise of a woman who does not find an appealing paradise in the accessible mythology of her own culture. It creatively rewrites and subverts the Fall Story, while using the familiar context recorded in the Biblical/Qoranic text.

The crow

that flew over us

and drove into the trouble thoughts of a vagrant cloud

*whose cry, like a short spear, streaked across the horizon
will carry our news to town.*

*Everyone knows
everyone knows
that you and I gazed at the garden
and picked the apple
from that coy and distant branch.*

*Everyone fears
everyone fears
yet you and I joined the water, the mirror, and the lamp
and did not fear.*

*It is not matter of a weak bond between two names
on the old pages of a registry
it is a matter of my charmed hair
and the burning peonies of your kisses
and the mutinous intimacy of our bodies
and our nakedness glittering
like fish scales in water
it is a matter of the little fountain's silver song
sung at dawn.*

*In the green, flowing forest
in the anxious, cold-blooded sea
in the strange, haughty mountain
we asked, one night
of the wild hares, the pearl-filled shells, the eagles
“What is to be done?”*

*Everyone knows
everyone knows
we found our way into the cold and silent repose
of Simurghs*
we found truth in the little garden
in the bashful look of a nameless flower
and eternity in the never-ending moment
when two suns gaze at each other.*

*It is not a matter of fearful whispers in the dark
it is a matter of daylight, open windows, and fresh air
and an oven where useless things are burnt
and an earth pregnant with new crop
it is a matter of birth, and completion, and pride
it is a matter of our amorous hands*

* Simurgh (Phoenix), the legendary bird in Persian Literature

connecting the nights

with perfume's messages of breeze and light.

Come to the meadow

come to the large meadow

and call me from behind the breath of Acacia blossoms

like a deer calling his mate.

The curtains are overflowing with a hidden spite

and innocent white doves

from the heights of their white towers

gaze at the earth below.⁴²

(Conquest of Garden, Book 4: Another Birth)

In *Conquest of Garden*, Forough Farrokhzad clearly subverts the nature of the man/woman relationship projected by the myth in its religious or secular version. Here, in this Garden, woman neither speaks for the devil nor assists Satan. Undeceiving and undeceived, she is neither gullible nor weak in nature. If Eve seems to be a captive of the identity imposed upon her, if in her sins as in her virtues she proves to be unchanging and unchangeable, the woman in this poem is on a journey of her own. Her body, stretched to new experiences, refuses to return to its original dimension. Her mind, exposed to new horizons, refuses confinement. She is fluid like water, protean, changing and challenging ceaselessly, moving, growing, and learning.

Her companion, the man, is also far from being a conventional character. Nor frightened of intimacy, he does not try to protect or preserve a false innocence. He does not find it necessary to blame the woman for deceiving him. He voluntarily picks from the forbidden tree and enters a Garden where he can choose and be chosen, desire and be desired, gratify and be gratified. He does not need to invade, to penetrate, or to attack. He knows how to love and be loved.

In this Garden, there is no Satan to lead either the man or the woman to their Fall. Without a scapegoat to mediate between innocence lost and sin accomplished, both voluntarily pick the apple and assume responsibility for their needs and deeds. This freedom explains why the pronouns ‘you’ and ‘I’ rather than ‘we’ are carefully used every time a decision is to be made or a step taken. In this utopia, the man and the woman console, delight, and strengthen one another. Love is neither bought nor sold in the name of power, possession, or protection. Sex is not exchanged for loyalty or security. Pleasure is reciprocated in kind, and sexuality is not tossed on the bargaining table. This garden is a place of trust where both partners can lower their defences, revel in the nonutilitarian quality of their partnership, receive the full force of love, and welcome intimacy and dialogue. With their love-locked hands, they can even “bridge the nights.” In this Garden, nakedness “glows.” Walls are demolished, artificial boundaries destroyed, curtains pulled, veils cast aside. Transparency

rather than secrecy is sought and valued. Here, feelings, like bodies, do not need a cover.

But this Paradise is surrounded by hell. It is a Garden enclosed in a hostile land, its paradisiacal aspect tempered by anger and anxiety. Even if it is a landscape of bliss, the site is not blessed. This Garden offers no privacy or repose. Ears and eyes grow on its trees, and birds tattletale with cries that cut the horizon like daggers. Gossip invades this utopic space. Uncalled-for visitors barge in. Intruders – real or imagined – haunt it. Crows, those ill-omened gossipmongers, visit it. This oasis of harmony between two lovers and nature offers no place of real comfort.

Feelings of dislocation and vulnerability lurk behind the festive mood of this poem. From the very first line, and at the ecstatic moment when the two lovers enter their paradise, the poet describes the crow flying over their heads, the crow that eventually will spread the news of their unconventional relationship. Anxiety breaks through from the outset. Guilt and suspicion set in. The couple, it seems, remains isolated, expelled as it were. This paradise eventually turns into an exile – a wilful self-exile at best. No wonder its inhabitants have to ask the hares, the shells, and the eagles, “What is to be done?”

Some of the submerged or implied feelings of *Conquest of Garden* achieve explicit expression in other poems and especially in poems published posthumously. The bliss enjoyed in the Garden proves to be short-lived.

Nakedness, however much valued, seems to cause agony, misunderstanding, and isolation. Passionate love proves to be a transient illusion. Images of Thanatos stalking Eros, of death of love and lust, of the sucking mouth of the grave, and, above all, of loneliness emerge.

They carried the whole innocence of a heart

to the castle of a fairy tales

and now

how could one ever dance again?

and toss her childhood tresses

upon flowing water?

How could one crush

the plucked and smelled apple?

O Darling, O my dearest Darling

what black clouds await

*the sun's festive day.*⁴³

(Let's Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season,

Book 5: Let's Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season)

Yet, crush the apple and leave her fairy-tale castle she must. Living on the fringes of her society, alone and lonely, a rebel conscious and perhaps tired of her rebellion, Farrokhzad foresees the coming of black clouds. An exile in her native land, she is “a lonely woman” suspended in the space of transition from

one cultural pattern to another. Uprooted, she is certain only of her uncertainty. Deracinated, she personifies the pleasures of hybridization, of mingling the old and the new, but also of their pains and problems.

And here I am

a lonely woman

at the threshold of a cold season

coming to understand the earth's contamination

and the elemental, sad despair of the sky

*and impotence of these concrete hands.*⁴⁴

(Let's Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season,

Book 5: 'Let's Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season')

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Mahmud Kianush, *Modern Persian Poetry*, Maryland, Ibex Publishers, 1996, (P: 13).
2. Helen Sancisi-Weerdenburg Groningen, “Exit Atossa: Images of Women in Greek Histography on Persia”, in *Veils and Words – The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1992, (P: 1).
3. Sarah Graham-Brown, “Images of Women”, in *Veils and Words – The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1992, (P: 3).
4. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 5: Let’s Believe in the beginning of the Cold Season*, Trans. Manavaz Alexanderian, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 40).
5. Farzaneh Milani, *Veils and Words – The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1992, (P: 12).
6. Mahshid Amirshahi, ” Introduction”, in *Veils and Words – The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1992, (P: 10).
7. Iraj Gorgin, “An Interview with Forough Farrokhzad”, in *Veils and Words – The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1992, (P: 11).

8. Ibid. (P: 11).
9. Simin Behbahani, “We Have Run and We Are Still Running”, in *Veils and Words – The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1992, (P: 11).
10. Tahereh Saffarzadeh, “Mardan-e Monhani [Curbed Men], in *Veils and Words – The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1992, (P: 11).
11. Michael C.Hillmann, “A Lonely Woman’, in *Veils and Words – The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1992, (P: 51).
12. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 3: Rebellion*, Trans. Mehdi Afshar, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 5).
13. Farzaneh Milani, *Veils and Words – The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1992, (P: 55).
14. Michael C.Hillmann, “A Lonely Woman”, in *Veils and Words – The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1992, (P: 61).
15. Mahshid Amirshahi, “Ba’d Az Ruz-e Akhar [After The Last Day], in *Veils and Words – The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1992, (P: 61).
16. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 1: The Captive*, Trans. Mehdi Afshar, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 21).

-
17. Ibid. (P: 79).
 18. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 2: The Wall*, Trans. Mehdi Afshar, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 18).
 19. Farrokhzad, Forough. *Book 4: Another Birth*, Trans. Manavaz Alexanderian, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 80).
 20. Farzaneh Milani, *Veils and Words – The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1992, (Pp: 69-70).
 21. Ibid. (P: 70).
 22. Erica Jong, “Fear of Flying”, in *Veils and Words – The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1992, (Pp: 70-71).
 23. Farzaneh Milani, “Pay-e Sohbat-e Simin Daneshvar [An Audience with Simin Daneshvar], in *Veils and Words – The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1992, (Pp: 71-72).
 24. Farzaneh Milani, *Veils and Words – The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1992, (Pp: 72-73).
 25. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 5: Let’s Believe in the beginning of the Cold Season*, Trans. Manavaz Alexanderian, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 24).
 26. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 1: The Captive*, Trans. Mehdi Afshar, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 21).

-
27. Forough Farrokhzad, "The Wall", in *Veils and Words – The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1992, (P: 134).
 28. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 4: Another Birth*, Trans. Manavaz Alexanderian, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 101).
 29. Ibid. (P: 5).
 30. Esma'ili and Sedarat, "Immortal, Forough Farrokhzad", in *Veils and Words – The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1992, (P: 136).
 31. Ibid. (P: 136).
 32. Virginia Woolf, "A Room of One's Own", in *Veils and Words – The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1992, (P: 138).
 33. Parvin Etesami, *Divan*, in *Veils and Words – The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1992, (P: 105).
 34. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 1: The Captive*, Trans. Mehdi Afshar, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 20).
 35. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 4: Another Birth*, Trans. Manavaz Alexanderian, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 32).
 36. Farrokhzad, Forough. *Book 2: The Wall*, Trans. Mehdi Afshar, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 54).

-
37. Tahereh Saffarzadeh, “Peyvandha-ye Talkh [Bitter Unions], in *Veils and Words – The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1992, (Pp: 143-144).
 38. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 1: The Captive*, Trans. Mehdi Afshar, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 64).
 39. Ibid. (P: 67).
 40. Ibid. (P: 12).
 41. Shoja’eed-Din Shafa, “Introduction to The Captive”, in *Veils and Words – The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1992, (P: 147).
 42. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 4: Another Birth*, Trans. Manavaz Alexanderian, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 84).
 43. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 5: Let’s Believe in the beginning of the Cold Season*, Trans. Manavaz Alexanderian, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 5).
 44. Ibid. (P: 5).
 45. Farzaneh Milani, *Veils and Words – The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1992.

CHAPTER IV

AN OUTLOOK OF CONTEMPORARY INDIAN POETRY IN ENGLISH

AND

THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF KAMALA DAS' POEMS



Chapter IV

An Outlook of Contemporary Indian Poetry in English and Thematic Analysis of Kamala Das' Poems

4.1. Modern Indian Poetry in English

Modern Indian Poetry in English is one of the many 'new literature' which began to emerge at the end of the Second World War after the end of colonialism. Unlike the creative writing of Africa and the Caribbean, modern Indian poetry in English has been neglected by most critics, foreign readers and intellectuals for it has no obvious direct relationship to the cultural movements which led to national independence; by 1947 the situation had changed and with it the concern of the new poets became their relationship to and alienation from the realities of their society. In particular, they faced a challenge from older nationalist intellectuals and from regionalists who demanded a renaissance of the culture of the pre-colonial languages of India.

Bruce King in his book , *Modern Indian Poetry in English* (2004) – which the following lines are based on that book – believes that the only answer to those who claimed that Indians could not write authentic poetry in the English in which they had been educated, is to write poetry as good as that of British, American and Irish poets, but to write it about Indian lives and conditions. This in itself became the basis of a still continuing conflict as cultural conservatives;

nationalists and political radicals wanted a literature about traditional culture or the poor and the rural Hindu masses, whereas the poets were more likely to be well-educated, middle class and part of or aware of the modern westernized culture of the cities, universities and professional classes. They often had been raised in families where English was one of the languages spoken, attended good English-language schools, early fallen in love with the English language and its literature, and been either brought up in a cultured environment or by their university days had friends with an interest in the arts and ideas. The supposedly traditional culture of the Hindi-speaking masses, or of their Parsi or Goan Catholic families, was either irrelevant to them or, in some cases, was part of the restrictions against which they were rebelling.

Many of the poets left India for study and travel abroad, or out of dissatisfaction. In this, they were no different from previous generations of Indian intellectuals and writers, including the leaders of the independence movement. Similar to previous generations, some of the writers settled abroad, while others returned, having made a significant choice, which would be central to their subsequent history and the development of Indian poetry in English. Among the early poets, Nissim Ezekiel (1924-2004) and Keshav Malik (b.1924) returned, while Dom Moraes (1938-2004) remained abroad for many years. Later the process would be repeated when Adil Jussawalla and R. Parthasarathy (b.1934) would study in England with the intention of residing there, only to

return disillusioned to India, while A.K.Ramanujan (1929-1993) and G. S. Sharat Chandra (1935-2000) would become American residents.

By the early 1960s, the pioneering of Ezekiel and others, centred first on the magazines *Illustrated Weekly of India* and *Quest*, had borne fruit in Writers Workshop volumes of poetry and the journal *Miscellany*. P. Lal (1929-2010), the editor, was one of the early poets; for the first time, there was a publisher of volumes of Indian poetry and another deserved promoter and publicist besides Ezekiel.

By the later 60s Indian Poetry in English had a handful of now classic volumes, not necessarily published by Writers Workshop, and established significant writers, including Ezekiel (1924-2004), Ramanujan (1929-1993), Kamala Das (1934-2009), and Gieve Patel (b.1946); it was gaining recognition from those with an interest in poetry and culture both in India and abroad. Other significant writers had begun to appear, including Arun Kolatkar (1932-2004), Parthasarathy (b.1934), Dilip Chitre (1938-2009), Arvind Krishna Mehrotra (b.1947), along with Pritish Nandy (b.1951). A few years later Jayanta Mahapatra (b.1928), Shiv Kumar (1936-1973), and Keki Daruwalla (b.1937) were becoming names to those with an interest in poetry. By now, the modern Indian English poets formed a sufficiently large group to have different tastes, aesthetics, standards and styles, with the result that Lal (1929-2010) and Nandy (b.1951) were not considered by many of the more serious poets to be of

their number. This partly reflected the rapidity with which the poetry was evolving towards international standards as well as differing notions of the art. By 1980, when Keki Daruwalla (b.1937) published the most recent of the major anthologies of modern Indian English verse, eighteen poets were considered worthy of serious attention, and since then others, such as Vikram Seth (b.1952) and Melanie Silgado (b.1956) have appeared, as has a small but rapidly increasing body of critical studies in books and academic journals on the poetry.

Despite continuing attacks on the Indian English poets, their place in modern Indian culture is recognized. Their poetry is a part of the process of modernization which includes urbanization, industrialization, mobility, independence, social change, increased communication (in the form of films, television, radio, journals and newspaper), national and international transportation networks, mass education and the resulting paradox that as an independent national culture emerges it also participates in the international, modern, usually westernized world. Unless some new radical changes occur, Indian social and economic progress is linked to the same processes of modernization, which, for historical and political reasons, have become wedded to the spread of an English language and the evolution of an English-language culture alongside Hindi and the regional languages. Although presently the language of only some four percent of the population and with no regional base, English is the language of those who govern, communicate, produce and make decisions at the national level. As the language of upward mobility and modern

consumer tastes, its use is likely to spread further and as it does it will increasingly become Indianized, a process already noticeable in magazines and in Indian poetry in English – in such features as the syntax, word order, lexis, idioms, pronunciation, intonation and stress patterns. This reflects a change in mentality. English is no longer the language of colonial rulers; it is a language of modern India in which words and expressions have recognized national rather than imported significances and references, alluding to local realities, traditions and ways of feeling. Such Indianization has been proceeding for several generations and is prominent in the story of Kamala Das (1934-2009) and Prithvi Nandy (b.1951), and present, although more nuanced, in the work of Keki Daruwalla (b.1937); it is more likely to be felt in terms of voice and stress in the verse of Ezekiel (1924-2004) and Jayanta Mahapatra (b.1928), or in the kind of rapidly expressed ironies found in the poetry of Ramanujan (1929-1993).

The poets as a group tend to be marginal to the traditional Hindu society not only by being alienated by their English-language education but also, more significantly, by coming from such communities as the Parsis, Jews and Christians, or by being rebels from Hinduism and Islam, or by living abroad. Many of the poets come from families that have already been partly westernized or that moved extensively during their childhood; several were sent to boarding schools. They often do not have local roots, or have been brought up in urban centres or studied or travelled abroad while still in their formative years. Their perspective is modern rather traditional. Unlike many of the colonial clerks and

the bourgeoisie who attempted to imitate the British, there is no other authentic mentality for the poets except that of the modern world and its concerns, which they may express or criticize but of which they are a part, as are an increasing number of Indians.

Since Ezekiel published his first book (1952) and the *Illustrated Weekly* and *Thought* began publishing Indian poetry in English, a history of publication, major works, journals, events, personalities and awards have already developed. There are perhaps thirty poets recognized to be of worth, a number of younger poets aspiring to that title and probably several hundred who have published volumes of poetry in English.

More significant than the achievements of individual poets is the rapidity with which Indian poetry in English has become a self-sustaining tradition with recognizable models, periods and influences. Where the early Ezekiel and P. Lal offered two contrasting models, since then Ramanujan, Parthasarathy, Daruwalla, Mahapatra, Kamala Das, Vikram Seth and De Souza (b.1955) are among those who have moved Indian poetry in English into new dimensions, as Ezekiel continues to do. Poets have a wider variety of Indian poems, voices, perspectives, forms and subject matter for models. How a national tradition is being formed can be seen in the way Ramanujan's poetry is an example for Parthasarathy's *Rough Passage*, while Parthasarathy influenced Santan Rodrigues's poems about his own Goan heritage.

There are identifiable periods when Indian poetry in English took new directions, such as the focusing on the actuality of personal and family life by Kamala Das and Ezekiel in the early 60s, or the experimental poetry of Mehrotra, Kolatkar, Nandy, Chitre and Mahapatra, which began to appear in the later 60s and early 70s. A renewed, more detailed satirical and yet compassionate focus on communal and family heritage has become evident more recently.

With each decade an increasing immediacy and heightened awareness of actual Indian experience is noticeable. While this might be a matter of kinds of technique and expression, it reflects a narrowing of the distance of the poet's perception of her or himself as poet from the actualities of the community life. Bruce King, the writer of the book, *Modern Indian Poetry in English (2004)*, does not mean that the poet is less conscious of being isolated or alienated, but rather that poetry reveals more of the environment, of other lives, and of the specifics of daily life, including relations with others. While this is clear in the verse of Eunice de Souza, Saleem Peeradina and Manohar Shetty, even the older poets write more directly from a context than previously. The increased perception of details and memories of Indian social reality, found in the work of Ezekiel, Kamala Das, and Ramanujan during the 60s and taken up by Daruwalla, has now been internalized, with recent poetry being richer in its sense of location and range of subject matter.

If at first modern Indian English verse appeared to be indebted to British and a few European models, it now reveals an awareness of most of world literature, including contemporary American, recent South American, and older Indian devotional verse in the regional languages. In this respect Indian poetry in English, poetry is no different from that of the regional languages, which also during the colonial period followed British examples and conversations of verse. Around the time of national independence, it started to reform itself as a modern literature by incorporating the techniques and themes of such major twentieth-century modernists as T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, by discovering the great body of French experimental poetry from the nineteenth-century Rimbaud and Lautreamont to the twentieth-century Dadaists and Surrealists, while learning from the political poetry of Neruda and others. Several of the Indian English poets, such as Kolatkar, Ramanujan and Chitre, are also involved with changes in the regional literatures.

The poet's decision to use English is influenced by education, but also by the state of regional-language poetry. Kamala Das says that when she began writing in English there was no modern poetry in Malayalam. Manohar Shetty says that in Tulu, the language of his family, there is no creative literature. The many Parsi poets writing in English may be explained by the fact that Parsi Gujarati is a dialect without a tradition of serious creative literature. The varied interplay of the Indian Poetry in English with that in the regional languages is a subject that needs further study.

Besides the role played by Kolatkar and Chitre in developing regional-language poetry in a new direction, the poets have been particularly active in translating from regional languages. There are translations by Ramanujan from classical and medieval Tamil and modern Kannada, by Mahapatra from modern Oriya, by Kolatkar from Marathi, by Chitre from modern and medieval Marathi, by Patel from Gujarati, by Mehrotra from Hindi, by P. Lal from Sanskrit, by Nandy from Bengali, Urdu and other languages. P. Lal and Nandy have been especially active as promoters and publishers of translations from classical and regional languages. Ezekiel and G. S. Sharat Chandra have also been involved with translations from Indian languages. Just as English has become the 'link' language for inter-regional communication for such groups as administrators, academics and the professional class, English translation serves as a link cultural language, making available to the middle classes the various regional languages and the classical tradition.

The interest of the Indian poets in English in devotional verse is part of the increasing range of Indian poetry in English. Whereas the significant poetry of the 50s and early 60s was primarily the personal short lyric, often confessional or argumentative, in the mid 60s poets found new modes of expression. While Ezekiel and Ramanujan were already familiar with American poetry, the American influence on Indian poetry became more significant in the mid 60s, when Daruwalla, Shiv Kumar and others began to aim for a less formal, direct personal voice and diction and to write about ordinary experience in

recognizable locations. The man-alone-in-a-hostile-world attitude, with its sense of opposition, cynicism and the ironies of life, found in the poetry of Daruwalla, has its affinities in American literature, as does Daruwalla's trust in the speaking voice. Although he continues to use traditional prosody and formal stanzaic shapes, the voice seems closer to the experience of the senses than in previous Indian poetry where there was often a distance between moral reflection and actuality. There is also openness, especially noticeable in the middle portions of the poems, as if association were taking over from logic. Narrative becomes experience itself instead of an example in argument.

This increasing openness and immediacy is also noticeable in Mehrotra's early *bharatmata: a prayer*, and somewhat later in the poetry of Saleem Peeradina. Besides being the start of highly subjective protest poetry, sometimes written by Nandy, the counter-cluster of the 60s strengthened the interest in surreal, Dadaist and experimental verse, which had already been explored by Kolatkar, Chitre and others in Marathi. While Marathi, Oriya and other regional languages had recent traditions of experimentalist, avant-garde writing, Indian Poetry in English began developing in such directions after 1965. Among the poets of the avant-garde were Mehrotra, Kolatkar, Chitre, Mahapatra, Nandy and Deba Patnaik; while they have gone on to write other kinds of poetry, some of their best-known poems, such as Mehrotra's *The Sale* and *Continuities*, Kolatkar's *The Boatride* and Chitre's *The Ambulance Ride*, show how liberating and productive was such experimentalism. If recent poets, particularly Silgado

and Shetty, have taken, a renewed interest in the more logically developed, more formally organized lyric, and they can do so with a sense of having been freed from the necessity of beginning a poem with a statement, which is logically developed to a conclusion. Their poetry is more linear and argumentatively constructed than that of Mehrotra and Mahapatra, but it is still more open, more ready to shift to the unexpected in subject matter and images and to offer unconventional emotions, than the poetry written between 1950 and 1965; it is more associational in organization than logically structured.

The open, associational poetry, with its surprising attitudes, prominence of such topics as guilt, sexuality, ambition, memories of past rebellions, conflicts, shames, childhood and love affairs, and the assertion of an articulate but fractured self, was part of the confessional mode that started in America during the early 50s and which was practised internationally during the 60s. There had always been a confessional tradition in modern Indian poetry as Ezekiel's poetry often makes use of allusions to his life and a desire for personal change, but Kamala Das' highly emotive, self-revelatory, moody poems were much more confessional; she wrote openly about varied, often conflicting emotions, values and hopes, without being concerned – as Ezekiel was – with consistency and the will for self-improvement. Whereas the autobiographical elements in Ezekiel's poetry usually appeared distanced, in Das' poetry her private life was brought forward as the subject matter.

Around 1970, Shiv Kumar took the confessional mode further in poetry filled with sexual desire, anger and rebellion, in which the voice and what was said shaped rhythm and form. While it might seem that anything could be said in whatever way it came to the writer provided that its rhythms, cadence, language and imagery felt like poetry, such recent confessional poets as de Souza, Shetty and Silgado are highly conscious of craft, revising their poems for understatement, economy and visual shape.

Related to but different from the confessional poem is the kind of open, obscure, somewhat surreal lyric practised by Mahapatra, and which younger Orissa poets have learned from him. In these poems, probably influenced by the 'open field' poetry written in America by Robert Bly and James Wright, an opening observation of the natural world is rapidly overtaken by obscure, highly charged personal associations, sometimes expressed in unexplainable imagery, concluding on an unexpected assertion of guilt, failure or, occasionally, hope. Such poetry appears very different from, and much more arbitrary in content as well as less open than, the confessional mode; but it shows such similar characteristics as rapid fluctuations of feeling, associational organization and a tendency towards the use of fantasy and the exploration of normally unarticulated areas of self-awareness. Even more than confessional poetry it appears addressed to the self. The poet ruminates about life and brings up, in striking and unusual images, feelings that others repress or rarely reluctant to display.

Besides the immediacy, experimentation, openness and self-revelation of modern Indian poetry in English, there is an increasing interest in the long poem, as a means of going beyond the fragmented vision and isolation associated with the short lyric. Such long poems are perhaps the closest modern culture can come to the shared national and communal values and experience of the classical epic. The distance between the modern sceptical individual and the traditional beliefs of a community is, however, the subject of this modern equivalent of the epic, as can be seen from such volumes as Parthasarathy's *Rough Passage*, with its record of alienation and desire for reintegration into a cultural tradition, Kolatkar's puzzlement at the discrepancy between legend and actuality in *Jejuri*, or Mahapatra's attempted reconciliation to his environment in *Relationship*. Daruwalla's *The Waterfront* sequence is another instance of an Indian English poet-seeking reconcilment with a tradition from which he feels alienated and of which he is rationally sceptical. A different approach to the problem of reintegration in Jussawalla's *Missing Person* in which the alienated middle-class intellectual is satirized for lack of commitment to the revolutionary forces of history. While such longer sequences of poems, with their extended range of themes and subject matter, may seem a world away from Ezekiel's early lyrics, it was Ezekiel who in *The Unfinished Man* first showed how a unified vision could be put together in which diverse lyrics were linked by theme, implied narrative, imagery and recurring but developing concerns.

Indian poetry in English has since independence already evolved into a literary tradition with a history of major journals, such as *Poetry India* and *Opinion Literary Quarterly*, interesting little magazines such as *damn you* and *Dialogue*, central volumes such as Ezekiel's *The Unfinished Man* and *The Exact name*, Kamala Das' *Summer in Calcutta* and Ramanujan's *The Striders*, which began a canon and which, belonging to the mid 60s, are now regarded as part of a golden age. It is a still vital, living, evolving tradition, as is shown by the often precarious, existence of such journals as *Chandrabhaga*, *Kavi-India* and the *Indian Literary Review*, each and all of which may have disappeared by the time you read this, no doubt to be replaced by other torch-bearers of contemporary poetry. In addition, there have been exciting first volumes published more recently, such as Eunice de Souza's *Fix* and Manohar Shetty's *A Guarded Space*.

While Indian poetry in English appears firmly established, in contrast to the 1950s when it hardly existed beyond the self-published volumes of Ezekiel and the publication of Dom Moraes in England, it still had major problems. More poetry was being written than before and publishers received manuscripts every day from new Indian poets in English hoping to break into print, but few publishers would publish poetry. The only commercial publishing houses to do so were Oxford University Press and Arnold-Heinemann; the others argued that the market is too small to make a profit. While the Oxford series showed that it was possible to make a profit on poetry, their authors were established names

and the books had the benefit of Oxford University Press' name and distribution network. Most poetry in India was privately published or subsidized by the author.

Later on, Indian poetry in English has taken root in India, found a small but increasing readership, and is here to stay. Indian poetry in English is one of the many new areas of culture, which have resulted from national independence. Perhaps the most exciting literary development in recent decades has been the emergence of national literatures in the Third World and in such former cultural colonies as Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The new literatures have taken their place alongside the older national literatures as equals. There are perhaps thirty Indian poets (there are undoubtedly others) who can stand alongside good English-language poets in other countries. This may not seem a large number, but, considering that the history of modern Indian poetry began around 1950, it is remarkable.

4.2. Women's Voices

The poems by Indian women today constitute a distinct phenomenon. It is the fact that they are not lagging far behind their male counterparts in a point of creativity. They have hardly written any light-hearted verse. They have carved out a distinct image of woman and taken her out of her cozy power of old world tradition and expressed her feelings and thoughts without any inhibitions.

Poetry in English by Indian women has been seen at odds with traditional culture. This is another issue overtaken by modern society in which what is supposedly traditional is often a guise for gaining or keeping power when faced with the liberating effects of democracy, education and urbanization. According to traditionalists, Sita should be the model for women, but, of course, there are many versions of the *Ramayana*, some of which might be thought feminist. Traditions are what you make of them; there are always other versions available, as can be seen in Ruth Vinita's *A Play of Light (1994)* which contrasts images of Sita the dominated with Saraswati, the unmarried goddess.

Kamala Das' *Summer in Calcutta (1965)* appeared at a time when English poetry by Indian women had moved on from such colonial and nationalist themes as the rewriting of legends, praise of peasants, and from general ethical statements to writing about personal experiences. While outmoded diction and sentiments were at last overtaken in favour of a more contemporary and less artificial manner, the subject matter of the women poets was often limited to well-meaning platitudes about romantic love, which were treated without depth, complexity, interest or even the projection of much emotion. By contrast, the poems of Kamala Das (1934- 2009) when focused on love treat it within broader ranges of themes, more realized settings and with deeper feeling, bringing to it an intensity of emotion and speech and a rich, full complexity of life. Das' themes go beyond stereotyped longings and complaints. Even her feeling of

loneliness and disappointment are part of a larger-than-life personality, obsessive in its awareness of its self, yet creating a drama of selfhood.

Having started writing verse in school and having early published in *Indian PEN* (1948), Kamala Das evolved from a rudimentary poet using traditional verse methods to someone with a highly personal voice but without strong awareness of technique or theory. She is a natural poet with an excellent feeling for sound, rhythm, phrasing, image, symbol, word play and drama. The prosody of her early poems is mostly a matter of counting syllables in a regular rhythm. Later, as her versification and sense of form became freer and looser, her style changed but did not necessarily improve. Always a hit-or-miss poet, who wrote regularly but trusted the muse more than revision, she began to miss more than often.

Her early poems are primarily concerned with her marriage, love life, desire for intimacy and the various results – including guilt – and her fame as a writer. There is a basic story, which Kamala Das tells about herself in her poetry and autobiography, *My Story*. Raised in the warmth of a tight-knit Kerala matrilineal society, she was uprooted when her father moved to Calcutta. For a time she attended a Catholic boarding school and was suddenly at a young age married to a cousin for whom she apparently had little affection, while he was too preoccupied with his career to expect more from his young wife than a cook and sexual partner. Left by herself as she and her husband moved home in

accordance with his job, rebellious, angry and confused, Das turned to others for affection. Her husband's willingness to let her have her sexual experiences was a further blow to her ego. What he saw as freedom for a writer she saw as a lack of caring.

Significantly, many of her poems are about the warmth of her childhood and the family home in Kerala. Similar to other South Indians, such as Ramanujan (1929-1993), Parthasarathy (b.1934), Sharat Chandra (1935-2000) and Meena Alexander (b.1951), she writes of memories of childhood, family relation and the family's great house. In her poetry, there is an idealized time of childhood at *My Grandmother's House* when she felt the security of love within familiar surroundings, innocent of sexual fears and frustration. It was a period of love, roots and freedom, in contrast to her present insecurity:

*...you cannot believe, darling,
Can you, that I lived in such a house and
Was proud, and loved . . . I who have lost
My way and beg now at strangers' doors to
Receive love, at least in small change? ¹*

(My Grandmother's House: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

The contrast between a familiar, secure, loving home and the world she now experiences since leaving her family for marriage, its dissatisfactions and her love affairs is the theme of *The Corridors*:

Why do I so often dream
Of a house where each silent
Corridor leads me to warm
Yellow rooms-and, loud voices
Welcome me, and rich, friendly
Laughter, and upturned faces.
... once awake, I
See the bed from which my love
Has fled, the empty room, the
Naked walls, count on fingers
My very few friends.²

(The Corridors: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

Despite the mercurial changes of mood, attitude and self-regard in her poetry there is an inner core of identity to which she refers – her name and aristocratic blood, her mother’s family, life in the South and her youth in contrast to her marriage.

Composition contrasts Das’ present life to ‘lying beside my grandmother’:

That was long ago.
Before the skin,
Intent on survival,
Learnt lessons of self-betrayal.

Before the red house that had stood for innocence crumbled

And the old woman died

...

The tragedy of life

Is not death but growth,

*The child growing into adult.*³

(Composition: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

After reviewing her marriage when her husband offered her ‘freedom’ to do as she wanted and the uncertainties and the self-doubts such freedom brought, often including lack of sexual satisfaction, she says that while she offers ‘autobiography’ to excite desire.

The only secrets I always

withhold

are that I am so alone

*and that I miss my grandmother.*⁴

(Composition: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

In *Composition*, Das claims that by ‘confessing / by peeling off my layers’, she will come nearer her ‘soul’ and ‘the bone’s / supreme indifference’.

There is a dualism in her writing, in which soul is contrasted to body. She seems to imagine overcoming this dualism only through death; her poems are

filled with longings to die, especially to drown in the sea, water being associated in her mind with an all-encompassing, universal calm, a formlessness in contrast to the conscious mind and body of the anxious individual. The dualism results from the fall from childhood innocence into the adult world of sexuality, marriage and life among strangers, especially an uncaring husband. *The Suicide* makes explicit the contrast between the happy security of childhood at her grandmother's and the search for love as an adult:

I had a house in Malabar

And a pale-green pond.

I did all my growing there

In the bright summer months.

I swam about and floated,

I lay speckled green and gold

In all the hours of the sun,

Until

My grandmother cried,

Darling, you must stop this bathing now.

You are much too big to play

Naked in the pond.⁵

(*The Suicide: The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

Rather than a poet of free love, she expresses the disappointments of sexuality. She describes a void to be filled with others or with alternative passions. In *The Freaks* she laments a lack of deep sexual passions of the kind that go with love; there is mere appetite without feelings of intimacy.

Alongside Das' unfilled need for love, another prominent subject of her poems is the need to assert, to conquer, and to dominate. There is, for example, her obsession with an older man who 'hurt' her in her teens and whom she obsessively feels she must capture as her lover. In her poetry, love and hate are often neighbours, just as an assertion of sexual freedom sits near feelings of self-disgust expressed through depression. The theatre of Das' poetry includes the revelations, the confession, the various contradictory bits and pieces. While the poems describe a longing for a man to fill her dreams with love, she is also proud of her conquests and ability to make men love her. Having taken a lover, she will mock him. Rather than the seduced, she often appears the seducer, the collector, especially of those men known as lady-killers. Driven by a need for an all-encompassing love to fill her days, she is also someone involved in the game of sexual triumph with its trophies.

Often her poetry offers its versions of the *carpe diem* theme, a seizing the day both in awareness of the passing of time and youth and in a need to live intensely. To a person who objects that her sexual adventures are spoiling her

name she replies: 'I know I have a life / To be lived, and each nameless /
Corpuscle in me, has its life':

...Why should I remember or bear

That sweet-sounding name, pinned to

Me, a medal, undeservingly

Gained, at moments when, all of

*Me is ablaze with life?*⁶

(Spoiling the Name: *Summer in Calcutta*)

If many poems speak of unhappiness and the desire for an all-absorbing love, others are filled with Das' discovery of the life around her on the streets and in bedrooms. While marriage has hurt her ego, leaving her unfulfilled, her poems also record a woman enjoying the newness of the world as she wanders the streets and pursues her own interests. The poems in *Summer in Calcutta* and even the later, sometimes more somber, depressed verses, written after serious illness, reveal someone younger, more questing, more sexually driven than author of *My Story* with its claim that being treated brutally led to adultery and its self-apologetics and spiritualist conclusion. The poems show that through her sexual confessions, her writing has made her a self-conscious celebrity; and she plays up to it, often bragging and celebrating.

The interest of Das' poetry is not the story of sex outside of marriage but the instability of her feelings, the way they rapidly shift and assume new postures,

new attitudes of defence, attack, explanation or celebration. Her poems are situated neither in the act of sex nor in feelings of love; they are instead involved with the self and its varied, often conflicting emotions, ranging from the desire for security and intimacy to the assertion of the ego, self-dramatization and feelings of shame and depression.

There is another, more interesting story behind the tale of a bored woman seeking refuge from an uncaring husband. In *An Apology to Gautama*, it is her husband who must comfort her from the rejection by another man. *I Shall Some Day* recognizes her own fear of the attraction to domestic comforts and her fear of freedom:

I shall someday leave, leave the cocoon
You built around me with morning tea
Love-words flung from doorways and of course
Your tired lust. . .
. . . and I shall someday see
My world, de-fleshed, de-veined, de-blooded,
Just a skeletal thing, then shut my
Eyes and take refuge, if nowhere else,
Here in your nest of familiar scorn. . .⁷

(I Shall Some Day: *Summer in Calcutta*)

Which returns us to the theme of freedom in *Composition*:

When I got married
My husband said,
You may have freedom,
As much as you want.
My soul balked at this diet of ash.
Freedom became my dancing shoe,
How well I danced,
And danced without rest,
Until the shoes turned grimy on my feet
*And I began to have doubts.*⁸

(Composition: 'The Old Playhouse and Other Poems')

In *Substitute*, even with her first and only great love:

End it, I cried, end it, and let us be free.
This freedom was our last strange toy.
Like the hangman's robe, even while new
It could give no pride. Nor even joy.
We kissed and we loved, all in a fury.
For another short hour or two
We went all warm and wild and lovely.
After that love became a swivel-door,

When one went out, another came in .⁹

(Substitute: '*The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*')

Writing is a means of creating a place in the world: the use of the personal voice and self-revelation are means of self-assertion. Das opened areas in which previously forbidden or ignored emotions could be expressed in ways, which reflect the true voice of feeling: she showed how an Indian woman poet could create a space for herself in the public world. She brings a sense of locality to her poems. There are the rooms in which she lives, the homes she has left, the bedrooms, restaurants and streets in which she meets her lovers, the rides in cars, the people she visits or notices, the people she addresses in personal terms. Whereas Ezekiel consciously refers to his environment, Das' poems assume their location; create their space by being set in situations rather than by observing or alluding to their environment.

Kamala Das' most remarkable achievement, however, is writing in an Indian English. Often her vocabulary, idioms, choice of verbs and some syntactical constructions are part of what has been termed the Indianization of English. This is an accomplishment. It is important in the development of a national literature that writers free themselves from the linguistic standards of their colonizers and create a literature based on local speech; and this is especially important for women writers. Such a development is not a matter of national pride or a linguistic equivalent of 'local colour' ; rather it is a matter of voice, tone, idiom

and rhythm, creating a style that accurately reflects what the writer feels or is trying to say instead of it being filtered through speech meant to reflect the assumptions and nuances of another society.

As this may seem a large claim for Das' poetry, a few examples may be useful for comparison. Monika Varma, one of the better women poets of an older generation, who often appeared under the Writers Workshop imprint, has criticized Das for falling into flat, adolescent and old-fashioned expressions. But here is the opening stanza of Varma's first poem, *In the Domino Dusk*, of her *Dragonflies Draw Flames* (1962, 1966) volume:

Read Rimbaud in the domino dusk of the stalagtite

evening

*when little bats go wheeling blackly into shadows asprawl upon the ground*¹⁰

While 'domino dusk', 'stalagtite evening' and 'shadows asprawl' show a poet's love of words, they are parts of a self-conscious poetic diction with no roots in common speech. Gauri Deshpande (1942-2003), one of the younger, university-educated women poets, often writes of love and motherhood without intensity of feeling. In the concluding stanza of Deshpande's *December*, the language is abstract, pretentious, and far from spoken speech:

When I feel the sun warm on my back

And tend to forget

It's winter

And you about to depart
Then the other times clearly felt
Futility of my life assumes import
As a vast preparation
For our confrontation
And its brief but vicious anger that set
Your hands hard about my face
*Before you went.*¹¹

Contrast such artificiality with the natural, direct speech rhythms of Das'

Words:

. . . Words are a nuisance, but
They grow on me like leaves on a tree,
They never seem to stop their coming,
*From a silence, somewhere deep within . . .*¹²

(Words: *Summer in Calcutta*)

In *An Apology to Goutama* the naturalness of expression and rhythm is powerful and the scene rapidly created, Even 'woman-form' seems an Indian compound word coinage:

. . . and yet Goutama,
The other owns me; while your arms hold
My woman-form, his hurting arms

*Hold my very soul.*¹³

(An Apology to Goutama: *Summer in Calcutta*)

The detail, the naturalness of speech, the Indian use of ‘gift’ as a verb and the cadence of the lines are noticeable in Das’ *The Looking Glass*:

. . . Notice the perfection

Of his limbs, his eyes reddening under

Shower, the skywalk 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 sweat between the breasts,

The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your

Endless female hungers. Oh yes, getting

A man to love is easy, but living

Without him afterward may have to be

*Faced . . .*¹⁴

(The Looking Glass: *The Descendants*)

In the poetry of Kamala Das and such younger women poets as de Souza and Silgado the directness of speech rhythms and colloquial language is an expression of emotional involvement. Their language reveals feeling in all their

quirkiness and unpredictability, whereas with previous women poet's language stands in the way of emotion, poeticizing and generalizing rather than reflecting it. Das, de Souza and Silgado offer a range of highly volatile emotions with poems unexpectedly, changing direction and gaining effect from their inner contrasts, conflicts, ironies and extremes.

While Das can be said to have created a climate for a more honest, revelatory, confessional poetry by Indian women, her abundance of manner, with its repetition of word, phrases and symbols, its curious blend of Indian English usage and the introspection of an Elizabethan sonneteer, seems at present overblown, even theatrical in the grand nineteenth-century romantic fashion, in contrast to the stripped-down style, street language and forcefulness of some contemporary women poets. The present contemporary manner appears to have been initiated by Mamta Kalia (b.1940) who explored the themes, attitudes, voices and registers of speech which have been taken further by de Souza and Silgado. Instead of Deshpande's love poem about awaiting the return of her man, Kalia complains of the effect of being a housewife on her individuality:

I no longer feel I'm Mamta Kalia

I'm Kamla

Or Vimla

Or Kanta or Shanta.

*I cook, I wash,
I bear, I rear,
I nag, I wag,
I sulk, I sag.*¹⁵

(Anonymous)

In *Tribute to Papa* (1970), she rebels against patriarchy and the inhibiting world of middle-class respectability, with its ‘clean thoughts, clean words, and clean teeth’.

Eunice de Souza’s *Fix* (1979) is also a thinner, less rich world than Kamala Das’ sound, images, language, phrasing, cadences and line lengths have been stripped down to little more than bare statements. There is little here of the complaints or attacks, demands for freedom and sexual enjoyment found in Das’ poetry. Instead of Das’ excess of emotion and self-dramatization, there is economy and control. Many of the poems are satires or are in a confessional mode similar to Sylvia Plath’s miming of deep fears and resentments, which are expressed through self-ironic wit. Where Das’ grandmother’s house seems an Eden, a paradise lost, the childhood of Eunice de Souza (b.1940) among the Goan community of Poona appears to have been a hell. The subjects of her satires are the church, marriage, Catholic motherhood, Indian colour prejudice, sexual prudery and hypocrisy, Goan vulgarity and the alienation felt by many Goan Catholics towards Hindu India.

Tara Patel's one book, *Single Woman (1991)*, assumes that being a woman is in itself a perspective on life. Using a simple vocabulary and an elementary sense of versification, craft and rhyme, Patel (b.1949) manages to create forceful images and poems that have a personal voice and tell a continuing story, a story that gains from being recognizable. The title of her volume is itself significant of a modern woman living alone without the securities of family and a husband about which other women complain. Her world is that of a modern woman with the illusions and pains of love, education, being on one's own. Violence, domination and neglect are lesser problems than the experience of pain and the wish to avoid what can hurt. Patel, like many other Indian female poets, also has a directness and frankness about sexual matters seldom found among the males.

Imtiaz Dharker's *Purdah (1989)* introduced a major new voice, someone as distinctive in her own way as Mamta Kalia, Kamala Das, and Eunice de Souza. Dharker (b. 1954) brought to Indian poetry a different background and a sense of political commitment. One of the few poets from a Muslim background, she was raised in Scotland and broke with her Pakistani family to marry an Indian and move to India. Her poetry is consciously feminist, consciously political, consciously that of a multiple outsider, someone who knows her own mind, rather than someone full of doubt and liberal ironies. She has a poet's instinctive talent for cadence, the sounds of words and rhyme. Although she appears to write free verse her lines are rhythmic, and despite differing lengths often have a strong iambic feel. As a painter and filmmaker, she has an instinct for images.

Her poems have both an argumentative and dramatic structure; in examining the personal, she becomes universal. Purdah is an alienation from one's own self, a doing of what is expected rather than what one feels. And this, in Dharker's view, results from the shame women are taught early on about their gender and sexuality.

Security is attractive, but is also a trap, falseness to oneself, purdah. Charmayne D'Souza (b.1955) often writes of the attractions of insecurity, the fun of anxieties. She can be witty about risks and satirical towards those who do not take risks. Her poems in *A Spelling Guide to Woman* (1991) appear easy, but often they take unexpected directions and the attitude is baffling. She knows that her imagination is playing with danger and violence. D'Souza is a poet of risks, of strange bedfellows.

Melanie Silgado's *The Earthworm's Story* (1978) is dedicated to her teacher. From de Souza's she learned how to write about herself and her past in a direct, colloquial style, and to use her Goan childhood and relation to her parents as a basis for self-analysis. Silgado (b.1956) tends to project her anxieties onto disturbing emotional images. In de Souza and Silgado, the women seem to be on their own: if they make a mess of their lives it is their mess and not the fault of husband or lover. But this must be qualified. Like many contemporary feminist writers, both de Souza and Silgado are preoccupied with their relationship to their father. Both de Souza and Silgado

seem to contrast their father's assurance and crude ease in the world with their own insecurities and fears. Where the fathers belonged to settled societies, which were deadening for women, the poets' own more liberate world is filled with anxieties, often influenced by their family, education and cultural inheritance. Silgado's strongest poems, along with those on her father's death, reveal a psychology of horrifying fears, depression, self-hates, insecurities, self-humiliations and failed emotions.

In Menka Shivdasani's *Nirvana at Ten Rupees (1990)*, social conventions and cultural myths are enemies of the repressed, angry, and imaginative self. Shivdasani (b. 1956), a well-travelled journalist who worked for a year in Hong Kong, was of the founding members of the Bombay Poetry Circle in 1986. In her poetry, she anticipated many of the new characteristics of Bombay poetry as it would develop during the 1990s. There was the inclusion of the filth, power shortages, bugs, noise and other disagreeable aspects of the city's life. There were the horrors and temptations of living alone in a small flat, the anxieties of a single life, which were complicated by being a woman. While her poetry alludes to a world of drugs, sex, bad food, broken relationships and sleepless nights, there is also wit, irony, knowingness, and a marvellous imagination. Shivdasani can use vulgar speech, make expressionist and confessional remarks, but the poetry is always highly imaged, clever, surprising, amusing and self-mocking. Her poetry holds together a private world of chaotic emotions through its logical development and its strikingly imaginative images.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (b. 1957) writes about India and Indian lives, yet she is one of several Indians who are part of the American literary and cultural scene and are not published in India itself. Best known as a novelist, she began with and continues to write poetry. Her *Leaving Yuba City* (1997), a volume of new and selected older poems, consists of a few poems about the author. Divakaruni has a novelist's sense of movement, narrative economy, point of view and use of memories. She has a remarkable ability to notice what is significant.

Sujata Bhatt (b. 1958) is perhaps the most ambitious and controversial of the female poets of the diaspora in her technique, especially when she uses Gujarati along with English. While Bhatt has written poems concerning the position of women in society, and while her expression of female sexuality might be thought feminist, the lives of women, gender and the relations between the sexes are not central to her work. It is possible to be of two minds about her poetry. The problem partly arises from the ways in which she identifies with India, but that is a more obvious expression of the ways she implies connections and insights only superficially found in the poems. Many of her poems are versions of 'road' poems, and have the same tendency found in Agha Shahid Ali's poetry to use a particular trip as a metaphor for life's journey, and which a critic might interpret as being part of the Indian diaspora. Her lyrics make grand gestures without the drama being clear; they are modern romantic odes, with all their attractiveness and vagueness.

Though she has been publishing poems for twenty years, Simta Agarwal (b. 1958) has not yet published a book. The poems included in the book, *Nine Indian Women Poets – an Anthology* (1997) by Eunice de Souza are from her unpublished manuscript *Glitch*. In a short piece on poetry written for *The Times of India*, Simta Agarwal says, “a poem performs a civilizing function, answering not only a human need for emotional expression but for rational control as well.”¹⁶ Poetry does this by resolving ‘warranting forces’ and she goes on to discuss the ways in which the poetry of Meerabai, Sylvia Plath and Emily Dickinson finds ways to explore and control these forces. Through this exploration and control, both poet and reader find new ways of understanding themselves and life. Smita Agarwal is frequently concerned with pain, but in the tradition of impersonality – T.S.Eliot’s theory – it is expressed through the dramatized consciousness of other people, or other forms of life. She also writes poems that begin with observations of nature, and then go on to an insight about a person or situation, personal or social.

Even nice young women from middle-class Hindu families are writing poetry in English, cursing their fathers and moving to America. Mukta Sambrani’s *The Woman in this Room Isn’t Lonely* (1997) is a book of surprising intensity and imagination. Sanbrani (b. 1975) has a lyricism and fanciful imagination seldom seen in English-language poetry in recent decades. The title of the poems, pointing to their basic source in the anxieties of a young female, are similar to the themes found in other women poets although her poems

develop very differently. She shares with Mahapatra (b. 1928) and Chitre (1938-2009) an instinct towards suggesting a world of multiple significances. There is a surreal characteristic of different kinds of realms of being interpenetrating so that the familiar suddenly involves the unexpected and becomes almost magical.

While the liberation of Indian poetry from a conscious, formalized British speech and diction occurs about the same time in the mid 1960s for both male and female poets, directions of expression and natural, idiomatic, colloquial vigour is more often found in the verse of Das, Kaila, de Souza and Silgado than in the male Indian English poets. In their rebellion against the traditional role of Indian women, the women poets, led by Das, had to fight against the kind of diction used by such poets as Varma and Deshpande, in which refined, lady-like language was associated with a conformity of behaviour and attitude. Just as in rejection, the spiritualism of Aurobindo, the male poets insisted on precision and economy, the women in expressing new attitude required a new, more appropriate way of writing about their emotions, experience and consciousness of themselves as women. As is often the case with poetry, language is an index of content.

4.3. Thematic Analysis of Kamala Das' Poems

Kamala Das is one of the three most significant Indian poets writing in English today, the other two being Nissim Ezekiel and Ramanujan. Her poetry is all about herself, about her intensely felt desire for love, for emotional

involvement, and her failure to achieve such a relationship. Hence, knowledge of her life and personality is essential for an understanding of her poetry.

Kamala Das – her maiden name was Madavikutty – was born at Punnayurkulam in Malabar in Kerala in 1934. Both her parents were poets, and so poetry was in her blood so to say. She constantly speaks of her Dravidian blood and of her Nair heritage. She was educated mainly at home. It seems that her grandmother showered a lot of love and affection on the growing child, and she is often remembered in her poetry as in *A Hot Noon in Malabar* and *My Grandmother's House*. She looks back to her happy days in her company with nostalgia and yearning. Her parents are seldom remembered with such love and affection. Wherever she has gone and wherever she has lived, she has remembered her early girlhood, cherished and nursed by her grandmother.

Kamala Das was educated mainly at home and denied the advantage of regular school and college education. This is surprising as both of her parents were poets and should have encouraged their talented daughter. She was married at the early age of fifteen, had three children, and was settled in Bombay. Like that of Nissim Ezekiel, her marriage has not been a happy one; in it, she has failed to find that fulfilment which a woman craves. The result has been frustration and disillusionment and this bitter personal experience colours all her poetry. It has been a hollow-relationship, she can neither endure it nor can she untie the marriage knot. Her husband is not unkind to her, indeed, he

has been a good friend to her and has allowed her every freedom, but as she herself tells us, it is love that she craves for, and not freedom. The poignant story of her life, of the psychological traumas she suffered, is narrated in her autobiography *My Story* serialized in *The Current Weekly* from January to December 1974, and it makes poignant reading. Similarly, autobiographical is the short prose-piece, entitled *I Study All Men – I Had to*, published in the *Illustrated Weekly of India* in 1971. It contains a candid account of her early marriage, her husband's boast of 'sluts and nymphomaniacs' he had reportedly known, his feeling that she was inadequate and incompatible, and her consequent launching into 'a hectic love life with small capital – just a pair of beautiful breasts and a faint musk-rat smell in my perspiration.....' The end reads like this:

“Last week the editor of a Kerala Weekly, a well-known capitalist, offered in return for my autobiography, a month's holiday at the most expensive hotel... I was thrilled. My husband said: Why not take 'K' along with you as a diversion? You seem to find him attractive. After working hard, I shall not grudge you a bit of relaxation. This is what I mean by friendship. It is hard to find a friend as good as my husband.”¹⁷

This is the tone of all Kamala's poetry. It is entirely unconventional and rather shocking in the Indian context. But Mrs. Das is always sincere, always

true to herself both in her prose and her poetry. As a wife, she was expected to look to the comforts of her husband, to minister to his needs, in short, to play the conventional role of a Hindu wife, and this has dwarfed and stunted her own personality:

*You called me wife,
I was taught to break saccharine into your tea, and
To offer at the right moment the vitamins,
Cowering
Beneath your monstrous ego. I ate the magic
loaf and
Because a dwarf.*¹⁸

(The Old Playhouse: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

Happy or unhappy, Kamala Das continued to live with her husband and continued to write both prose and poetry, both in English and Malayalam. She was thus bilingual, like most other Indian poets writing in English. 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. *Only the Soul Knows How to Sing* (1996), a representative and comprehensive selection of Kamala Das' poems—is a slim, beautifully produced book; in this collection, Das' sexual confessions delight,

because they constantly surprise. Her feelings are unstable and shift rapidly, assuming new postures, new attitudes of defense and attack, shame and celebration. Her self is at continuous play and her poems dramatize its myriad moods. Still she has made her mark, is universally acknowledged as one of the greatest of Indian poets writing in English, one who had the courage to express her essentially feminine sensibility, honestly and sincerely, without any reservation 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. Says Eunice De Souza, “In her best poems, it is impossible not to be moved by and involved in the passionate curve of the rhythm, the haunting and telling images of sterility (*Dance of the Eunuchs*), the ultimate resilience in the face of any relationship that threatens to devastate her vital and potential self.”¹⁹ There is too the unforced pathos of a woman, who seems to snatch at odd moments of happiness,

Drive fast to town and

*Lie near my friend for an hour.*²⁰

and whose encounters in her search for love often fail, and who is forced back to,

The cocoon

you built around me with morning tea,

Love-words flung from doorways and of course

*Your tired lust.*²¹

To the bitterly ironic consolation:

*It will be all right if I put up my hair,
Stand near my husband to make a proud pair...*²²

and to the bleakly realistic:

*I am the type that endures...*²³

(Dance of the Eunuchs: *Summer in Calcutta*)

She has published eleven books in Malayalam. Her prose, whether in English or Malayalam, is all autobiographical. Her short stories such as *Frigidity and Sepia-tainted Photograph* clearly deal with her personal experience and with the theme of love and the emotional discontent, which seems to be inseparably bound up with such experiences. Her miscellaneous essays such as *I Studied All Men, What Women Expect Out of Marriage and What They Get, Why Not More Than One Husband?, I Have Lived Beautifully* have fixed in the mind of the reading public the image of Kamala Das projected by her poems in *Summer in Calcutta...* “feminine but forthright, unconventional but honest, ebullient but said, impetuous but insecure.”²⁴ She has been contributing to a number of journals and literary Magazines including *Opinion, The Illustrated Weekly of India: Poetry East and West, Debonair, Eve’s Weekly, Femina, Imprint, Weekly Round Table* and *Love and Friendship*.

Her many literary merits have been recognized and her poems find an honourable place in all anthologies of Indo-English poetry. She was given the *Poetry Award of The Asian PEN Anthology* in 1964 and the *Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award* in 1969 for *Cold* – a collection of short stories in Malayalam. Her poems have appeared in *Opinion, New Writing in India* and *Young Commonwealth Poets' 65*. With a frankness and openness unusual in the Indian context, Kamala Das expresses her need for love. What is overpowering about her poems is their sense of urgency. They literally boil over. With a slender corpus of poetry, she has secured prominent place among the immortals of literature. This is so because as Devendra Kohli points out “Courage and honesty are the strength of Kamala Das’ character and her poetry; and the courage lies in not only being able to admit that one has aged, when one has, but in also being able to assert in the face of it that in the final analysis one has no regrets and that one has lived beautifully in this beautiful world”²⁵, and that one can,

*...look at my maker if at all that is possible with no apology for my
past exuberances, no extenuations, for deep inside I know well that
I have lived beautifully in this beautiful world... .²⁶*

Kamala Das’ poetry is characterized by extreme sincerity and integrity; she speaks out of her love-longings, frustrations and disillusionments with a disarming, frankness. She writes, it seems, for therapeutic purposes. It is a kind

of psychological striptease that she enacts in her poetry. As she herself has put it, “I must let my mind striptease I must extrude autobiography.”²⁷ Her own self is at the very centre of the three anthologies of poetry that she has published upto date, as also at that of her prose-works. Of her prose-works *My Story*, her autobiography is most important, for it throws considerable light on her poetry. It shows that in a male dominated world, she tried to assert her individuality, to maintain her feminine identity, and from this revolt arose all her troubles, psychological traumas and frustrations. A bird’s eye-view of her poetry would serve to clarify the point.

Summer in Calcutta (1965), first published anthology of Kamala’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. The exceptions are *The Flag* and *Sepia*. *The Flag* is about the Indian poor, and *Sepia* is about the Indian lack in originality and trenchancy of her best work. They are conventional and traditional, full of commonplace clichés and statements. To a *Big Brother* and *Punishment in Kindergarten* are evocations of her own childhood.

In this volume, we come across a world, which is, harsh, sun-scorched, tropical world, 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 sustained. Only the hardy marigolds and

bougainvillea survive, and courtesans with ‘tinsel and jasmine in their hair’. The poet herself feels ‘a hunger to take in with greed, like a forest fire that/Consumes...’

“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”.²⁸

The title-piece, *Summer in Calcutta* depicts action and gesture, a self-contained mood of sensuous luxury similar to that of Keats *Ode on Indolence* in which also a sense of lassitude is peculiarly blended with that of creative inspiration. The image of the April Sun in it brings to the poet a sense of sensuous relaxation, of warm intoxication, which inspires as well as relaxes so that ‘my worries doze’. The poem 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’ reaction is her unconscious intimacy with this torture.”²⁹

The opening poem, *The Dance of the Eunuchs* sets the tone of the whole volume, as well as of the other two volumes. Dancing eunuchs are a familiar sight in India but in Kamala’s poem, their whirling movement and extended frenzy are contrasted with ‘inner vacuity’, and so they are mere convulsions.

Kamala Das herself suffered from such an ‘emotional vacuity’ and so her dance is also symbolic of her inner self. It is said that the poem was written against the background of the poet’s sudden contact with “a man who had hurt me when I was fourteen years old”³⁰; she wanted “to get him at any cost.”³¹ The poem is powerful and bold indeed, and displays an admirable sense of proportion in the use of imagery and metaphor. It displays a very skilled use of imagery and symbolism. *In Love*, which follows, considers the gap between the sensuous completeness of sexual love, ‘this skin-communicated thing’, and the questions, which because the memory of the experience lingers somehow, come up in the mind.

The lyric shows a desire to understand the workings of the feminine consciousness. Her best known poem in this volume *An Introduction* is concerned with the question of human identity, but it effectively uses the confessional and the rhetorical modes in order to focus on questions relating to a woman’s or an Indian poet’s identity in English. ‘Fit in’, they said, ‘Belong, cried the categorizers.’ But she responds to this by transforming her alienation from ‘critics, friends, visiting cousins’ who say, ‘Don’t write in English’ into a larger and more universal alienation (sexual, social and artistic) that seems to characterize some of the best literature of our age and is perhaps at the heart of any attempt at self-exploration and self-integration. First, the freedom to choose her language, and a confidence in her creative talent:

The language I speak

Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses

All mine, mine alone. It is half English, half

Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest.

*It is as human as I am human...*³²

(Introduction: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

Then comes the puzzling adolescence and the pain of growing up. This is followed by a desire to be even with the male world on its own terms, despite the family and social pressures to conform to the traditional feminine role:

Dress in sarees, be girl,

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

Be a quareller with servants, Fit in. Oh,

Belong, cried the categorizers. Don't sit

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

Be Amy, or be Kamala. Or, better

Still be Madhavikutty. It is time to

*Choose a name, a role . . .*³³

(Introduction: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

And finally, self-realization that her experiences are the experiences of every woman:

*I met a man, loved him. Call
 Him not by any name, he is every man
 who wants a woman, just I am every
 Woman who seeks love. In him...the hungry haste
 Of rivers, in me ...the ocean's tireless
 Waiting.*³⁴

(Introduction: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

There is passivity as well as rebellion against a man-dominated world. In another fine lyric in the collection, *The Freaks* the nymphomaniac persona breaks down, and admits that her lust is a defence mechanism for survival, a cover for her sense of inadequacy: 'It's only/To save my face, I flaunt, at/Times a grand, flamboyant lust'. Stripped of her mechanisms for survival which break down, the neurotic persona finds herself profoundly alone and longing for the cessation of conflict, however temporary this cessation may be. 'Luminal' records these feelings with a quietness and controlled brevity which make it one of the most moving poems Kamala Das has written:

*Love-lorn
 It is only
 Wise at times, to let sleep
 Make holes in memory, even,
 If it*

Be the cold and
Luminous sleep banked in
The heart of pills, for he shall not
Your ruthless one,
Being human, clumsy
With noise and movement, the soul's mute
Arena,
*That silent sleep inside your sleep.*³⁵

(Luminol: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

But there is no escape from conflict, from a sense of sterility. Unable to find fulfilment as a woman, or to give satisfaction as one, the poet sees in the eunuchs writhing in vacant ecstasy a devastating image of her own sterility.

A Relationship is a study of another facet of love, which is now seen as a love-hate relationship. The poetess writes, “That I shall find my rest, my sleep, my peace/And even death nowhere else but here in/My betrayer’s arm....”³⁶ These words are records of the poet’s love-hate relationship with her lover, one which she cannot either shake-off or bear permanently, a true confession of the inescapable—what Devendra Kohli calls the modern, “Indian woman’s ambivalence.”³⁷ *An Apology of Gautama* studies yet another face of love—the theme of dual loyalties. The poet wants to remain with her husband, but also does not want to give up the other man:

*Another voice haunts my ear, another face
 My dreams, but in your arms I must today
 Lie, and find an oasis where memories'
 Sad winds do not so much blow, and I must
 Hear you say, "I love, I love, I love."³⁸*

(An Apology of Gautama: *Summer in Calcutta*)

The poet's deep-seated yearning to be loved is best displayed by the emphatic verb "must" and then dramatized by the triple repetition of the phrase "I love". Her mood here is one of repose. The tone is calm and her attitude fully satiable. *The Testing of the Sirens* communicates simultaneously a strong sense of belonging to one and uniting with another:

*I am happy, just being with you. But you . . .
 You love another
 I know, he said, perhaps a handsome man,
 A young and handsome man. Not young,
 Not handsome, I thought, just a filthy snob.³⁹*

(The Testing of the Sirens: *Summer in Calcutta*)

The poet wakes out from a night full of love and lust to a sense of physical loneliness, goes through a drive with another man with a pockmarked face and, while he is taking her photograph, arises with a keen desire for love, which is doomed to remain unfilled. Her relationship with either of her lovers is a loyalty

of the moment, to the first (of the night) that of the limbs and to the second (with the pockmarked face) 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 flowing water, and entertaining her with Hindi film songs.

A number of other fine lyrics in this collection — *The End of Spring; Too Early the Autumn Sights; Visitors to the City; Punishment in Kindergarten; The Siesta; With 1st Quiet Tongue; My Morning Tongue*, etc., — continue the poet's exploration of the love theme and her personal frustrations and disillusionments.

However, in another group of poems like *The Flag; Someone Else's Song; Forest Fire; and The Wild Bougainvillea* she is able to rise from the particular to the general, which she also does in *An Introduction*, already noticed above. She assumes an impersonal tone and identifies herself with 'million, million people'. But, on the whole, the volume is a record of her own personal frustrations and 'psychological traumas'. She has not yet attained the power to rise from the particular to the general, from the personal to the universal. This maturity is more in evidence in the volume, which followed two years later.

Kamala Das' second poems volume, *The Descendants* (1967), contains only twenty-nine poems, and with few exceptions, they are about love. The

exceptions are the two poems about her own sons *Jaisurya* and *The White Flowers*.

The finest lyrics in this collection are *The Descendants; The Invitation; Composition; Shut out that Moon; Neutral Tones; The Suicide; A Request; The Substitute; The Ferns Convicts'*. *The Looking Glass*, and *The Captive*. All these lyrics are further variations on the theme of love, and are pessimistic, even death-conscious, in tone. Her personal frustrations and sense of loneliness are always there, and impart to the poems a rare intensity and immediacy of appeal. But they also show that the poet has matured, that, "she has achieved tranquillity and equipoise and is cool, serene and sometimes numb. 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".⁴⁰ *The Suicide* with the central image of the sea moves on a pattern of dialogues and reflections. "Here, the sea does not drown the Phoenician sailor nor does it negate regeneration. It rather stands as a symbol of eternity and incorporates all. The poet yearns to go deep down into the bed of the sea and negate all drudgery arising out of her emotional displacement. This poem has no localized epicentre of experience but there is a sustained undercurrent of intensities and acutely unappeasable emotions. It has many voices emerging from its different parts. The complex mental state is reflected in the very movement and jerk of thought, sometimes in dialogues with the sea and sometimes in isolation. The poem has a narrative strain and the lines are

invariably short. Her reflections and thoughts swarming in succession underline the poet's agony and her fluid mental state. The poem takes its life from a confluence of various layers of psychic streams."⁴¹

In *Composition* also, the sea image occurs: Here the first stanza accumulates the central burden and leads to a plunge in the essential crisis, which the poet faces. "Nowhere in the poem the shades thicken so cohesively as they do in the beginning, since the poet now presents the past, now dramatizes the present, now reflects upon them with intermittent flashes and so on. In the course of the circular movement of the poem there is enumerated the wages she has paid for her existence. The consistently fatigued tone and the ironic overtones dominate the poem's structure. Firstly, innocence is replaced by growing consciousness, which makes all the difference. In the absence of any pleasure whatsoever, the poet is reminded of the old grandmother with whom she identifies all love lost in life. She ironically pleads to all women to kneel down before the male ego since it is implicit in the institution of marriage"⁴² The irony depends further: "I have reached an age in which one forgives all."⁴³ "*The Composition*, ironically, is but one's growth and consciousness that cause the tragic catastrophe. This concept of suffering brings Kamala Das closer to the Hindu belief in *Kramik Cycle* according to which one suffers one's prescribed share as a result of the wrongs done and sins committed during myriad cycles of births and deaths. The poem finds an extension of meaning, acquiring new dimensions of thought and feeling. Kamala Das transcends her own mutilated self and transmutes her

personal and private experience into something rich and universal. The poem has a therapeutic effect, the significance of which cannot be minimised”.⁴⁴

The theme of divided loyalties, which was there in the previous volume also, finds here a more intensive treatment in *The Substitute*. Commenting on the admirable lyric Anisur Rehman writes, “the poet’s bid to forget his identity is expressed by the single counter “oh”, and her rejection of her lot by the words ‘nameless’ and ‘faceless’. The words transmit her sense of fatigue and exhaustion as also the futility of remembering them. As a natural corollary to it, she rates her own old, familiar stance as valuable and significant. Her encounter with life has ever been full and unflinching. As only an exposure causes the shot of an object in a photo camera, she also has similarly exposed herself to life so as to receive its myriad impressions. She does not take recourse to things grand in order to explore the reality of life, nor does she dive deep into the unfathomable depths of philosophy. A neutral initiation into life and inwardness with it reward her both with illumination and idiom. Her method is to begin from the personal and travel in the identifiable regions beyond the ego. The process of selection and rejection, as seen in these poems, is her vital means and remains a constant preoccupation with her”.⁴⁵

In *The Invitation*, while the sea offers one kind of death, a complete negation, her lover whom she cannot disobey offers another, metaphorical death—the feeling of ‘lying on a funeral pyre/With a burning head’. The

language of delirium suggests the feeling of torture met with in her more recent treatment of sexual love. The poet rejects the way of the sea and prefers to shrink or grow in her own way. Although the man has gone for good, the poet is warmed by the memory of her experience. She cannot forget the intensity of the moment of love,

*All through that summer's afternoons we lay
On beds, our limbs inert, cells expending
Into throbbing suns. The heat had
Blotted our thoughts...*⁴⁶

(The Invitation: *The Descendants*)

There is suffusing organic warmth in these lines. Similarly, the poem *Ferns* presents sexual love in an image of self-devouring and self-mocking intensity, which suggests that perhaps there is a sense in which her glorification of physical love carries with it an element of disenchantment.

One of the finest lyrics in the volume explores material love and expresses feminine sensibility in its finest form. *Jaisurya* describes labour, pain and birth of the child:

*They raised him
To me then, proud Jaisurya, my son
Separated from darkness that was mine*

*And in me.*⁴⁷

(Jaisurya: *The Descendants*)

Here the name of the child has been chosen even before his birth. This is a clear proof of the mother's overwhelming love for the unseen child. Putting an adjective "proud" before Jaisurya is like putting a crown on the child's head and imparting him an identity. "Darkness" implies 'womb' from which the baby has come. This is the individuality of a woman to adore the child and forget her own pains of bearing it. The poetess suffers in child birth, but this suffering is seen as a common, feminine predicament. Here Kamala Das, the woman and Kamala Das the artist, become one, and the personal experience is universalized. The volume displays greater artistic maturity and control.

The anthology, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems (1973)*, contains thirty-three poems in all, of which twenty have been taken from the two previous volumes. Thus, there are only thirteen new poems, which reveal new facets, and a further artistic maturity. The love-theme is still there, but an entirely new dimension and a new intensity are added to its treatment. Further, the poems of the volume reveal the poet's pre-occupation with death and decay not noticeable in the earlier volumes.

The title piece is the poet's protest against the domination of the male and the consequent dwarfing of the female. The woman is expected to play certain conventional roles, and her own wishes and aspirations are not taken into

account. The intensity of the protest, conveyed in a conversational idiom and rhythm, makes it symbolic of the protest of all womanhood against the male ego:

*You called me wife,
I was taught to break saccharine into your tea and
To offer at the right moment 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 incoherent replies.*⁴⁸

(The Old Playhouse: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

A different kind of protest—this time against the religious fanaticism—is voiced in *The Inheritance*. The lyric is bitter, ironical, but not cynical. It deals with the hatred and intolerance that goes in the name of religion whether it is Islam, Christianity, or Hinduism. What man has inherited is not love but hatred: ‘this ancient/Virus that we nurtured in the soul ...’

The Blood is another admirable poem in this collection. It evokes the poet’s love of her old house and of her grandmother who is now dead. It is autobiographical, marked by a wistful nostalgia, a wistful yearning for the happy past.

This long poem also shows the poet's pre-occupation with thoughts of death and decay. The serious tone suggests vague premonitions of some impending calamity, and the house is personalized and comes to life:

*I know the rats are running now
Across the darkened halls,
They do not fear the dead
I know the white ants have reached my house
And have raised on walls
Strange totems of burial.
At night, in stillness,
From every town I live in
I hear the rattle of its death
The noise of rafters creaking
And the window's whine
I have let you down
Old house, I seek forgiveness.*⁴⁹

(The Blood: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

However, in *Nani*, the tone is comic and we find the poet laughing in the 'court of death'. The suicide of the pregnant maidservant is spoken of as a 'comic dance', but the flippant tone is merely a mask for the underlying

seriousness. *Gino* is one of the finest poems in this collection. The terror of sex, its attraction and revulsion, are powerfully expressed:

You will perish from his kiss, he said, as one must

Surely die, when bitten by a Krait who fills

The bloodstream with its accursed essence. I was quiet

*For once, my tongue had failed in my mouth.*⁵⁰

(Gino: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

It encloses a tempest of feelings and the poem is a pack of references coming out in succession. For such poems, Kamala Das chooses the medium of free verse. Her vanquished personality is reflected in its images. The 'Krait', 'obscene hands', 'ward boys', 'dark X-ray rooms', 'aeroplanes bursting red in the sky' and 'half-caste children' are powerful symbolic images.

The cumulative burden of domesticity, dull routine, sickness, and the anticipation of death are sensitively portrayed in the final passage:

I shall be the fat-kneed hag in the long queue

The one from whose shopping bag the mean potato must

Roll across the road. I shall be the patient

On the hospital bed, lying in drugged slumber

And dreaming of home. I shall be the grandmother

willing away her belongings, those scraps and trinkets

*More lasting than her bones. Perhaps some womb in that
Darker world shall convulse, when I finally enter,
A legitimate entrant, marked by discontent.*⁵¹

(Gino: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

The poet is conscious of her own ageing and the decaying of her body. Indeed, such thoughts keep recurring in the poems of this collection.

The Stone Age is another admirable poem in which the tension results from the fact that love is offered by another man, and not by the husband. The husband is seen as an “old fat spider” who weaves “webs of bewilderment” around the woman and builds the dead, stony walls of domesticity, smugness, passivity, and turns her into “a bird of stone, a granite dove”. He is the perpetual irritant, an un-welcome intruder into the privacy of her mind. “Other men haunt her mind, and “sink/Like white suns in the swell of my Dravidian blood”. When the husband leaves, she drives along the sea and climbs the forty noisy steps to knock at another’s door. At this point, the act of defiance having taken place, the deed done, freedom asserted, and the dull cocoon of domesticity assaulted, the lines suddenly become alive with the energy of questioning, and the theme of winning and losing, of reckoning asserts itself:

..... *Ask me, everybody, ask me
What he sees in me, asks me why he is called a lion,
A libertine, asks me the flavour of his*

Mouth, ask me why his hand sways like a hooded snake
Before it clasps my pubis. Ask me why like
A great tree, felled, he stumps against my beasts
And sleeps. Ask me why life is bliss and love is
Shorter still, ask me what is bliss and what its price...⁵²

(The Stone Age: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

The Prisoner is another fine poem in which the poetess compares herself to the convict who studies his person's geography with distrust and hope. In this poem, the use of the word 'trapping' is very significant, for it suggests "the trappings of lust from which she must free herself to know true love" as well as "the soul's cry against its mortal dress." What Mrs. Das suggests here is the fact that there is no real freedom from imprisonment of this world or of lust.

An entirely new note is struck in *After the Illness*. Commenting on this fine lyric Davendra Kohli writes, "Concern with disease, illness, decay and death is at the centre of *After the Illness*, but what emerges from her reflections on the brevity of love is the mysterious force that keeps the lover filled with the thoughts of her survival".⁵³ Apparently inspired by Kamala Das' recovery from a serious illness, the poem is concerned with the theme of survival: not merely of "the weary body settling in to accustomed grooves", but of her lover's love in spite of the fact that in her –

.....*There was*
Not much flesh left for the flesh to hunger, the blood had
Sickened too much to lust, and the skin, without health's
*Anointments, was numb and unyearning.*⁵⁴

(After the Illness: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

Filled with the thought of what was perhaps a miraculous survival, she finds herself wondering as to what sustained his love for her: “What lusted then/For him, was it perhaps the deeply hidden soul?” Kamala Das does not attempt to resolve the dilemma. To say this is not simply to point out the element of realism in her portrayal of her moods, but to underlie her approach to experience, which makes such realism, if that is the right word for the borderline between sexual love and spiritual love, possible. Kamala Das seems to suggest that perhaps the two are inseparable, but that she finds it difficult to experience this wholeness, this sense of completeness without a shadow of doubt and uncertainty.

In a number of poems published in the earlier volumes, and now included in the present one, the poet seeks to provide a mythical framework to her quest of love outside marriage. She seeks an objective co-relative, for her own love-longing, and finds them in the age-old Hindu myths of Radha-Krishna and Mira Bai. While searching for and celebrating love outside marriage, she identifies herself, as in “Radha Krishna” and “Vrindavan”, with Radha, or with Mira Bai

who relinquished the ties of marriage in search of Lord Krishna, the true and eternal lover who is also the epitome of the fullest consciousness that a human being can contemplate:

*Vrindavan lives on in every woman's mind,
and the flute, luring her
From home and her husband
who late asks her of the long scratch on the brown
Aureola of her breast, and she shyly replies,
hiding flushed cheeks,
It was so dark outside, I tripped and fell over
the brambles in the wood.*⁵⁵

(Radha Krishna: *Summer in Calcutta*)

“Vrindavan” is here symbolic of a psychological state, of the woman’s eternal quest for true love, and the security and fulfilment that such love brings.

The Millionaires at Marine Drive marks a slight shift in her attitude towards men and their love. It voices a general dissatisfaction with the male character as a whole, and not merely with the husband with whom she has no emotional contact at all. The figure of the old grandmother appears again, a relative who alone provides her with some tenderness and warmth.

Love is Kamala Das' central theme and her chief pre-occupation. However, love has many facets, the poet studies it from many angles, and her treatment of the theme is characterized by increasing depth and intensity.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Kamala Das, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*, Hyderabad, Orient Longman, 2004, (P: 32).
2. Ibid. (P: 45).
3. Ibid. (P: 3).
4. Ibid. (P: 3).
5. Ibid. (P: 34).
6. Kamala Das, *Summer in Calcutta*, Kerala, D C Books, 2004, (P: 27).
7. Ibid. (P: 54).
8. Kamala Das, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*, Hyderabad, Orient Longman, 2004, (P: 3).
9. Ibid. (P: 57).
10. Monica Warma, "In the Domino Dusk", in *Modern Indian Poetry in English*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2010, (P:153).
11. Gauri Deshpande, "December", in *Modern Indian Poetry in English*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2010, (P:153).
12. Kamala Das, *Summer in Calcutta*, Kerala, D C Books, 2004, (P: 9).
13. Ibid. (P: 18).
14. Kamala Das, *The Descendants*, Calcutta, Writers Workshop, 1991, (P: 15).

-
15. Mamta Kalia, "Anonymous", in *Modern Indian Poetry in English*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2010, (P: 155).
 16. Eunice de Souza, *Nine Indian Women Poets – An Anthology*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2010, (P: 60)
 17. Kamala Das, *My Story*, New Delhi, Harper Collins Publishers, 2009, (P: 163).
 18. Kamala Das, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*, Hyderabad, Orient Longman, 2004, (P: 1).
 19. Eunice De Souza, *New Indian English Poets and Poetry*, New Delhi, Rama Brothers India PVT.LTD. , 2005, (P: 95).
 20. Kamala Das, *Summer in Calcutta*, Kerala, D C Books, 2004, (P: 7).
 21. Ibid. (P: 7).
 22. Ibid. (P: 7).
 23. Ibid. (P: 7).
 24. Raghukul Tilak, *New Indian English Poets and Poetry*, New Delhi, Rama Brothers India PVT.LTD. , 2005, (P: 96).
 25. Devendra Kohli, *New Indian English Poets and Poetry*, New Delhi, Rama Brothers India PVT.LTD. , 2005, (P: 96).
 26. Kamala Das, *My Story*, New Delhi, Harper Collins Publishers, 2009, (P: 78).
 27. Ibid. (P:80).

-
- 28.Raghukul Tilak, *New Indian English Poets and Poetry*, New Delhi, Rama Brothers India PVT.LTD. , 2005, (P: 98).
- 29.Ibid. (P: 98).
- 30.Kamala Das, *My Story*, New Delhi, Harper Collins Publishers, 2009, (P: 112).
- 31.Ibid. (P:113).
- 32.Kamala Das, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*, Hyderabad, Orient Longman, 2004, (P: 26).
- 33.Ibid. (P: 26).
- 34.Ibid. (P: 26).
- 35.Ibid. (P: 12).
- 36.Kamala Das, *Summer in Calcutta*, Kerala, D C Books, 2004, (P: 17).
- 37.Devendra Kohli, *New Indian English Poets and Poetry*, New Delhi, Rama Brothers India PVT.LTD. , 2005, (P: 100).
- 38.Kamala Das, *Summer in Calcutta*, Kerala, D C Books, 2004, (P: 18).
- 39.Ibid. (P: 66).
- 40.Anisur Rehman, *New Indian English Poets and Poetry*, New Delhi, Rama Brothers India PVT.LTD. , 2005, (P: 101).
- 41.Ibid. (P: 101).
- 42.Ibid. (P: 102).
- 43.Ibid. (P: 102).
- 44.Ibid. (P: 102).

-
- 45.Ibid. (P: 102).
- 46.Kamala Das, *The Descendants*, Calcutta, Writers Workshop, 1991, (P: 20).
- 47.Ibid. (P: 33).
- 48.Kamala Das, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*, Hyderabad, Orient Longman, 2004, (P: 1).
- 49.Ibid. (P: 16).
- 50.Ibid. (P: 13).
- 51.Ibid. (P: 13).
- 52.Ibid. (P: 51).
- 53.Devendra Kohli, *New Indian English Poets and Poetry*, New Delhi, Rama Brothers India PVT.LTD. , 2005, (P: 105).
- 54.Kamala Das, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*, Hyderabad, Orient Longman, 2004, (P: 50).
- 55.Kamala Das, *Summer in Calcutta*, Kerala, D C Books, 2004, (P: 39).
- 56.Bruce King, *Modern Indian Poetry in English*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2010.
- 57.Iqbal Kaur, *Perspectives on Kamala Das' Poetry*, New Delhi, Intellectual Publishing House, 1995.
- 58.Mina Surjit Singh, *Six Women Poets – A Cross-Cultural Study*, New Delhi, Prestige Books, 2003.

59. Raghukul Tilak, *New Indian English Poets and Poetry*, New Delhi, Rama Brothers India PVT.LTD. , 2005.
60. Saleem Peerdina, *Contemporary Indian Poetry in English – An Assessment and Selection*, Bombay, Macmillan, 1972.

CHAPTER V

**COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DIFFERENT ASPECTS AS
EXPRESSED IN THE POEMS
OF
KAMALA DAS AND FOROUGH FARROKHZAD**



Chapter V

Comparative Study of Different Aspects as Expressed in the Poems of Kamala Das and Forough Farrokhzad

Kamala Das and Forough Farrokhzad are the poets of great accomplishments; they are among the selected few women of letters who have, at the same time, been poets, critics, fictionists, artists, and true women. Having written on a variety of themes, they seem to be excelling one another as poets of love. They share a community of thought and feeling. With unusual openness, they express their views on love. What is overpowering about their poems is their sense of urgency. At the same time, they impress by being very much themselves in their poems. Their tone, throughout, is distinctively feminine. Matured and experienced poets, they have made pronouncements on life, love, and literature. In an interview, Forough Farrokhzad said:

Poetry is a serious business for me. It is a responsibility I feel vis-à-vis my own being. It is a sort of answer I feel compelled to give to my own life. I respect poetry in the very same way that religious people respect religion.

For me words are very important; each word creates its own characteristic atmosphere, just as objects do. I realized that I needed words, fresh words that related to the particular world... words that are full of life, and I don't care if they are not yet

*considered poetic.*¹

Kamala Das, too, writes about her vacation in sharp, evocative, and poignant words:

*...like music in a Koel's egg, there was poetry in my veins although clotted for want of words to express it. I grew up watching my mother write her poems lying on her stomach on an old four-poster bed. I knew that the time would come for me to begin writing too. I groped in the darkness at night for words to convey my emotion. I was in love with a husband who did not want love, and it was sweet torment to lie with my face against his feet while he slept. Mine was a crushed love, a beautiful and futile emotion.*²

These confessions tell us amply about their beliefs and concerns. These are a kind of manifesto, a programme for muse. These poets write poetry in a language learnt at school. Though conscious of being true to the native soil, they feel free to write about any theme under the sun and employ any mode of articulation that suits them. Extremely well-informed about the latest developments in Europe or America, they cleverly refuse to emulate impress them. Yet, they are not altogether insensitive to the use of new words and images. Their poetry is, in fact, replete with these examples – new words, new images and new techniques, thus transcending the narrow individual and national frontiers.

The two share generously the world of their thoughts on the writing of poetry and their own responses to it. The special power of their poetry, irrespective of their diverse milieu, springs from their strength of belief in love. Women as they are, they are convinced that there is an eternal magic potency informing such themes as love. It is a part of their long worship of the Muse incarnated in the beloved. Many have found that the doctrine of love, whether sexual or Platonic, is a proper stuff for poetry. But unlike other poets (Auden, Graves and Yates), they give the reader a sense of inclusion and do not keep their privacy. Their poetry, therefore, with some justification maybe called Confessional. All the two have written lyrics, free verse on love. Forough Farrokhzad and Kamala Das, frank and aggressive utterances about sex, love marriage, and extra-marital ventures leave the reader quite baffled and overwhelmed by their power to use words with pointed effect. The ferocious intensity of this passion, this boiling cauldron of heated emotion, which Farrokhzad and Das articulate in their poetry, stirs deep chords in the reader's mind.

5.1. Comparison

1. Forough and Kamala are simple and fluid in language and imagery. The simplicity of diction, conversational patterns and tone, avoidance of artificiality of expression, as well as their choice of images from everyday life, all surely contribute to a closer connection between them and their readers. Life, death,

happiness, sorrow, the beauty of nature, the ugliness of social injustice, hope in love's triumph, despair, frustration, childhood, the sacredness of womanhood and the mystical beauty of sex filled their poems with the spirit of reality.

In subject matter, Forough Farrokhzad was daring and brave enough to express the hidden feelings and emotions of the Iranian women. Her earlier poems clearly reflected the sorrows and the aspirations of contemporary Iranian young women, who felt drowned in their innocent youth and confined to a repressed life behind the curtains of traditions. She clearly voices her feelings in the mid-1950s about conventional marriage, the plight of women in Iran and her own situation as a wife and mother no longer able to live a conventional life.

Only you, O Iranian woman, have remained

In bonds of wretchedness, misfortune, and cruelty;

If you want these bonds broken,

grasp the skirt of obstinacy

Do not relent because of pleasing promises,

never submit to tyranny;

become a flood of anger, hate and pain,

exercise the heavy stone of cruelty.

It is your warm embracing bosom

that nurtures proud and pompous man;

*it is your joyous smile that bestows
on his heart warmth and vigour.*

*For that person who is your creation,
to enjoy preference and superiority is shameful;
woman, take action because a world
awaits and is in tune with you.*

*Sleeping in a dark grave is happier for you
than this abject servitude and misfortune;
where is that proud man..? Tell him
to bow his head henceforth at your threshold.*

*Where is that proud man? Tell him to get up
because a woman is here rising to battle him;
her words are the truth, in which cause
she will never shed tears out of weakness.¹*

(Call to Arms, Book 3: The Rebellion)

In one of her letters to Ebrahim Golestan, she wrote: “I feel I lost all my age and I know so much less than I should have known at this age of 27. Maybe because I have never had a clear and bright life. That ridiculous love and marriage at the age of 16, made my life unstable and shaky.”³ Her poetic vision has continued to be one of the achievements of modernism in Persian poetry.

Kamala Das also is against the traditional norms of her society in India. To some extent, she presents a feminist movement through her poetry. She discovers male hegemony from the inner core of her feminine consciousness. She has delineated her feminist voice through sex imagery.

In all the three collections, *Summer in Calcutta* (1965), *The Descendants* (1967), and *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems* (1973), Kamala Das concentrates on virtually one theme, love or rather failure or absence of love with the obsessiveness of a woman who can realize her being only through love. The frustration of love literally boils over in poems like *The Freaks* and *Substitute* in which she tells us rather cynically, what her despairing experience of love has turned out to be:

After that love became a swivel-door

When one went out, another came in. ⁴

(Substitute: *The Descendants*)

While her sensibility seems to be obsessively preoccupied with love, it finds love invariably petering out into lust, and lust merely eating itself to the point of nausea:

his limbs like pale and

carnivorous plants reaching

out for me...

and the sad lie of my unending lust
The neon wink, the harlots walk, swaying
their wasted lips, the
Rich men dance with one another's wives and
Eke out a shabby,
Secret ecstasy, and poor old men lie
on wet pavements and
cough, cough their lungs out...
And is he female who
After love, smooths out the bed sheets with
Finicky hands and plunks
From pillows strands of hair?
... How well I can see him
After a murder, conscientiously
Tidy up the scene, wash
the bloodstains under
Faucet, bury the knife...⁵

(The Doubt: *The Descendants*)

Das' tussle with love, sex, lust, deprivation, unfulfilment, and separation can be seen in the context of her relation with her husband and with other men in her life. In *Composition*, she tells us

*When I got married,
 My husband said,
 You may have your freedom,
 as much as you want.
 My soul-balked at this diet of ash,
 Freedom became my dancing shoe,
 how well I danced,
 and danced without rest,
 until the shoes turned grimy on my feet
 And I began to have doubts.⁶*

(Composition: *The Descendants*)

Das' relationship with her husband is purely physical:

*You were pleased
 with my body's response, its weather, its usual
 shallow convulsions.⁷*

(The Old Playhouse: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

Indeed, this stark reality accounts for the terrifying loneliness in her life and is correspondingly expressed in her poetry. Her poetry represents an incessant quest for love and identity – perhaps an identity that is misplaced. In fact, these poems need to be seen as elegies on the death of love in an intrusive marriage,

drab and banal. In her own words, “I am positive that if I had been unmarried, I would have been a better writer.”⁸

The passionate urge and drive of the rhythm, the haunting images of sterility and the ultimate resilience in the face of the relationship that threatens to devastate her vital and potential self are brought out evocatively in *Dance of the Eunuchs* and *The Old Playhouse*.

You called me wife

*I was taught to break saccharine into your tea and
to offer at the right moment the vitamins. Cowering
beneath your monstrous ego I ate the magic loaf and
became a dwarf.*⁹

(The Old Playhouse: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

There is an unmistakable presence of unforced pathos of a woman craving for a moment of happiness:

I must

*Drive fast to town and
Lie near my friend for an hour.*¹⁰

(The Joss-Sticks at Cadell Road: *The Descendants*)

but her quest for real love often fails, and in despair she must return to

The cocoon

you built around me with morning tea

Love words flung from door-ways and of course

*Your tired lust.*¹¹

(I Shall Some Day: *Summer in Calcutta*)

In expressing the experience of her futility, she lays bare hesitations, failures, ignorance, shame and feeling of guilt. There is no attempt to idealize, glorify or celebrate the sublime human experience. Quite the contrary, through icy, stony, steely and dark images, she succeeds in projecting, with brutal honesty, the feelings of her agonizing guilt, nauseating disgust, physical rotting and sickness, inhuman bitterness and ultimate futility:

When I die

Do not throw the meat and bones 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.*¹²

(A Request: *The Descendants*)

The climax of the futility of love is reached in *Loud Posters* where the poet distrusts the very medium of poetry and laments its artificiality:

I've stretched my two dimensional

Nudity on sheets of weeklies, monthlies

Quarterlies, a sad sacrifice. I've put

My private voice away, adopted the

*Typewriter's click as my only speech*¹³

(Loud Posters : *Summer in Calcutta*)

The poem *In Love* opens with an expansive image of the burning sun in the sky symptomatic of the spiritual and physical symbiosis. This master image, in turn, evokes a series of other remarkable images. The lover, whose mouth is like 'the burning mouth of sun' spreads his limbs like 'carnivorous plants reaching out' for her, and draws her up in embraces which are like 'a finished jigsaw'. However, irrespective of the ecstasy of love, the poet's 'moody mind' hears the sobs of anguish lurking behind the 'gaiety trumpets'. With lust quenched, the undercurrent floats up and she distinctly hears, 'the corpse-bearers Bol/Hari Bo', and a 'million questions awake' in her while she confronts 'the silence of the room'. The answer to these questions obviously lays in her realization that real love is quite elusive, much beyond 'the skin-communicated thing'; it is the

sublimation of 'unending lust' into eternal fulfilment through physical annihilation.

The repeated articulation of frenetic and unabashed sexual love or frustration and incompatibility with her male-lover may be partly responsible for her feeling of loneliness and isolation.

I went to him for half an hour

As pure woman, pure misery

Fragile glass, breaking

Crumbling...

The house was silent in the heat

Only the old rafters creaking

He drew me to him

Rudely

With a lover's haste, an armful

of splinters designed to hurt and

*Pregnant with pain.*¹⁴

(The Old Playhouse: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

When the unrequited love finds its fulfilment, the crude and hasty style is replaced by intimate, introspective one notable for disciplined clarity of domestic imagery, sensitivity and flashes of imagination:

*Until I found you,
I wrote verse, drew pictures
And, then out with friends,
For walks...
Now that I love you,
Curled like an old mongrel
My life lies, content,
In you...¹⁵*

(The Old Playhouse: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

Das' poetry has been labelled as poetry of protest, or anguish, of love, of pain, of disgust, of despair, of bitterness. With her characteristic ironic mockery, deliberate and self-conscious cynicism, she advises:

*Husbands and wives
here is my advice to you
Obey each other's crazy commands,
ignore the sane.
Turn your home into a merry
dog-house,
marriage is meant to be all this
anyway,
being arranged in*

*most humorous heaven.*¹⁶

(Composition: *The Descendants*)

Her poetry signals the advent of a new phenomenon in the Indian poetry in English – a far cry from Toru Dutt or even Sarojini Naidu. Hers is a fiercely feminine sensibility that articulates without inhibitions the hurts it has received in an insensitive, largely man-made world. She may be said to have ushered in a kind of new morality where the time-bound virtues like timidity, submission, chastity, and dependence of woman are thrown overboard. Instead of stooping to conquer, she is out to demolish the concept of male dominance and his egoistic superiority in her poetry.

When a man is dead, or a woman

We call the corpse not he

*Or she but it.*¹⁷

(The Doubt: *The Descendants*)

The same mood of disgust for male smugness is also revealed in *A Losing Battle* in which she tells us that:

Men are worthless, to trap them

use the cheapest bait of all, but never

*Love...*¹⁸

(A Losing Battle: *Only the Soul Knows How to Sing*)

The pleading for women's liberation from male dominance continues in more aggressive and uninhibited tone in *The Conflagration*.

*Woman, is this happiness, this lying buried
Beneath a man? It's time again to come alive
The world extends a lot beyond his six-foot frame.*¹⁹

(The Conflagration: *The Descendants*)

Das' love poetry embodies a very subjective, personal, idiosyncratic tone. We are swept along by frequently alternating moods of frustration and celebration, and have to be alert to gauge their emotional intensity. Concrete, intuitive, and naive in her manner, she disarms the reader of her ferocious frankness. *Glass*, for instance, which suggests in mock indifference the poet's ritual manipulation of various lovers, concludes in bare, austere, clinical lines, stunning the reader with her flamboyant fantasies of sexual neuroticism:

*... I do not bother
To tell: I've misplaced a father
somewhere, and look
For him now everywhere.*²⁰

(Glass: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

The flagrant eroticism is made obvious by the use of blunt, descriptive vocabulary, concrete physical imagery, including anatomical detail and body

function as well as a wide range of natural images, rather than by the abstract, intellectual, and metaphysical qualities of language.

The clue to understand Das' poetry is the poem *An Introduction* which reveals her life philosophy based on the Vedantic concept of 'Thou art me'. Her own experience becomes everybody's experience and everyone else's experience becomes her own:

*Who are you, I ask each and everyone,
The answer is, it is I, anywhere and,
Everywhere I see him who calls himself
I;...*²¹

(An Introduction: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

The quick cataloguing of people in power in the opening lines of the poem and the apparent disregard for politics suggest that the poet, though acutely conscious of the contemporary problems, is absolutely confident of viewing them with detachment. Her art, she confesses, might look queer, but the oddities are entirely her own, honest and human, 'as I am human', and to that extent compel attention. The peculiar cast of her mind and learning make her shun 'pretending games'. Love and death come to her in one surge, thus marking the quickening rhythm of human existence. She can, thus, universalize her joys and sorrows, and correlate her own emotions with those of others. It is this broad and universal vision that lends Kamala Das' poetry the ring of authenticity and

invests it with a depth of feeling. Though apparently her poetic leitmotif is that of 'love' in variegated forms, there runs an undercurrent of the lament of lonesomeness, of decay, of death. As a result, her poetry awakens us to the metaphysical relationship between love and death, love's consummation in death and death's harmony in love.

Her first volume of poetry *The Captive* was published in 1955, when Forough Farrokhzad was twenty years old. Bold, sensual, and unmistakably female, Farrokhzad's was voice that had never before been heard in Persian poetry. Many of *The Captive's* forty-four poems take aim at the strictures of a conventional Iranian marriage, likening it again and again to a prison and cage for women. In one poem (*The Deserted House*), Farrokhzad writes from the perspective of a young woman contemplating a divorce and what she knows will mean permanent separation from her child. In others, the speaker confesses to adulterous affairs, sometimes with regret but never without some degree of delight. The erotic poems in the collection are set in tight, enclosed spaces; despite their moments of physical intimacy, Farrokhzad's lovers are frequently haunted by an unconsummated longing for connection.

The speaker throughout these poems is a serious, searching, loving, young woman. The poems contain no philosophizing themes, or full-blown descriptions of nature. Images drawn from nature appear in these poems as part of a world in which love and the giving it implies are all that matter or seem, to

exist. The speaker reveals a spectrum of moods: anticipation, regret, joy, remorse, loneliness, abandon, repentance, doubt, and reverie. But the immediate issue is love, a woman's love for a man that makes the heart ache and that can satisfy all needs. The immediacy and intensity of reader's reaction to the personal, autobiographical voice in *The Captive* derived in large measure, of course, from the unprecedented feminine character.

*I want you, yet I know that never
can I embrace you to my heart's content.
you are that clear and bright sky.
I, in this corner of the cage, am a captive bird.
From behind the cold and dark bars
directing toward you my rueful look of astonishment,
I am thinking that a hand might come
and I might suddenly spread my wings in your direction.

I am thinking that in a moment of neglect
I might fly from this silent prison,
laugh in the eyes of the man who is my jailer
and beside you begin life anew.

I am thinking these things, yet I know
that I cannot, dare not leave this prison.*

*even if the jailer would wish it,
no breath or breeze remains for my flight.*

*From behind the bars, every bright morning
the look of a child smile in my face;
when I begin a song of joy,
his lips come toward me with a kiss.*

*O sky, if I want one day
to fly from this silent prison,
what shall I say to the weeping child's eyes:
forget about me, for I am captive bird?*

*I am that candle which illumines a ruins
with the burning of her heart.
If I want to choose silent darkness,
I will bring a nest to ruin.²²*

(The Captive, Book 1: The Captive)

The Wall appeared in 1956 and *The Rebellion* followed the next year. Farrokhzad's second volume of verse, *The Wall* containing twenty-five short lyrics, includes poems like *The Captive*, which, do not present palpable Iranian settings or autobiographical details amenable to verification on the basis of internal evidence. Love moments, wishful thinking about love, lovers'

complaints, and the like are the main subjects. But as a natural continuation of the sorts of statements in *The Captive*, the poems in *The Wall* seem very Iranian in their moods and reflective of emotional states natural for an Iranian woman in the poet's circumstances. In addition, at the risk of oversimplification, one can assert a difference between the two volumes in terms of what their titles emphasize. In *The Captive*, Farrokhzad depicts her plight as an individual, whereas in *The Wall* she treats her state and sense of captivity. In several poems in *The Wall*, the female speaker refers to her own poetry and lack of a good name.

In *The Rebellion*, her third collection with seventeen poems, she reveals that she has moved to that state from her sense of being a captive and facing walls. Farrokhzad herself later referred to *The Rebellion* as “the hopeless thrashing of arms and legs between two stages of life... the final gasps for breath before a sort of release.”²³ The collection as a whole embodies a mood and anger reminiscent of Khayyam's in Edward FitzGerald's *Rubayat of Omar Khayyam*. For example, in *Divine Rebellion*, the speaker declares what she would do if she were God. She would let the sun loose in darkness, throw mountains into the sea, set forests on fire, join souls to bodies brought from the grave, "drive out / the flock of ascetics from the green unholy pastures of heaven," and, finally:

*Weary of divine asceticism,
at midnight in Satan's bed*

*I would seek refuge in the downward slopes
of a fresh sin.*

*I would choose at the price of
the golden crown of godhood,
the dark and painful pleasure
of sin's embrace.²⁴*

(Devine Rebellion, Book 3: *The Rebellion*)

With each volume, her skill had risen to match her bold poetic persona. If there is one theme except love that unifies Farrokhzad's early poems, it is that of silence—and the necessity of breaking it. In *The Captive*, she writes:

*Don't put the seal of silence on my lips
I have untold tales to tell
Take off the heavy chains from my foot
I am disturbed by all of this.²⁵*

(The Captive, Book 1: *The Captive*)

The woman in Kamala Das poems is also struggling between passion and tradition. Das, similar to Farrokhzad wants to break the chains around her and wants to be free and not to be silent. She does not want to be domesticated because her real self will be vanished as she says in *An Introduction*:

Dress in sarees, be girl
Be wife, they said. Be embroidered, be cook,
Be a quarreler with servents. Don't sit
On walls or peep in through our lace-draped windows.
Be Amy or be Kamala or better
Still, be Madhavikutty. It is time to
Choose a name, a role.²⁶

(An Introduction: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

And what is her answer?

.... Why not leave
Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,
Every one of you? Why not let me speak in
Any language I like? The language I speak,
Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses
All mine, mine alone.
It is half English, half Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest,
It is as human as I am human, don't
You see? It voices my joys, my longings, my
Hopes, and it is useful to me as cawing
Is to crows or roaring to the lions, it
Is human speech, the speech of the mind that is

*Here and not there, a mind that sees and hears and
Is aware. Not the deaf, blind speech
Of trees in storm or of monsoon clouds or of rain or the
Incoherent mutterings of the blazing
Funeral pyre.*²⁷

(An Introduction: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

One of the most important groups to have emerged on the poetic scene after the Second World War, the Confessional poets are the primary continuators of a tradition that attempts to make significance and beauty out of the terror of our modern condition which is marked by a retreat into privatism and a progressive alienation of the artist from society. Emily Dickinson once called publication “the auction of the mind”,²⁸ but today many of our writers regard such psychological self-probing as the soul’s therapy. While the romantic poet lost his personal complaint in the music of universal forlornness, the confessional poet aims at making explicit what was once implied, by stripping off the persona or mask and making the speaking voice unequivocally his own. The private life of the poet, specially under stress of psychological crisis, therefore, becomes a major theme. Confessional poetry is further marked by sexual or erotic candour, frankness about family life, confession of private humiliations of varying pathological degrees and kinds, proliferating images of failure, in short, by a literal self-exposure.

Fascinated by the details of her personal life, reviewers of the time focused almost exclusively on the erotic aspects of Farrokhzad's poetry. Erotic poetry, in fact, has a long history in Iranian literature; passion is a frequent theme of ancient Persian poets like Hafez, Rumi, and Khayyam. Farrokhzad, however, was the first woman in Iranian history to write erotic verse. Rather than placing her in a tradition of the great lyric poets, critics deemed her erotic poems the product of a depraved female sentimentality. In a society, where historically, women, their beauty, breasts, hair, etc., had freely been made the subjects of poems, Farrokhzad made men her poetic subjects, her objects of love and reverie, of passion and sexual desire. Her poems are autobiographical and from a clearly feminine perspective.

The poem entitled *The Sin*, one of Farrokhzad's best-known and most widely anthologized early poems, confessionally epitomizes one such unprecedented expression of female desire. *The Sin*, is the sensual communion between two lovers; but in Farrokhzad's poem, the 'beloved' of ancient verse becomes herself the 'lover'. The reversal upends not only poetic but also moral convention. Here, it is the woman whose eyes linger on the man's body and who captures her own "sin" with poetic rapture.

I sinned, a sin all filled with pleasure
wrapped in an embraced, warm and fiery

I sinned in a pair of arms

that were vibrant, virile, violent.

In that dim and quiet place of seclusion

I looked into his eyes brimming with mystery

my heart throbbed in my chest all too excited

by the desire glowing in his eyes.

In that dim and quiet place of seclusion

as I sat next to him all scattered inside

his lips poured lust on my lips

and I left behind the sorrows of my heart.

I whispered in his ear these words of love:

“I want you, mate of my soul

I want you, life-giving embrace

I want you, lover gone mad”

Desire surged in his eyes

red wine swirled in the cup

my body surfed all over his

in the softness of the downy bed.

*I sinned, a sin all filled with pleasure
next to a body now limp and languid
I know not what I did, God
in that dim and quiet place of seclusion.*¹¹

(The Sin, Book 2: The Wall)

Even today, readings of Farrokhzad often fall prey to a false division between her early poems, which are dismissed as merely intimate and sensual, and her later ones, which are lauded for their historical and metaphysical themes. However, in a culture in which anxieties about female sexuality stand at the heart of legal and moral control of women's lives, Farrokhzad's treatment of sexual themes was without precedent or parallel, and it would produce a revolution in Iranian women's writing.

Sensationalism has always been part of Kamala Das intent, need and strategy to jolt a complacent patriarchy and orthodoxy. Her life and confessional writings have often aroused diverse and strong reactions that swing between the two extremes of admiration and outrage. Her fundamental rejection of the traditional Hindu woman's virtues, for a candid articulation of her sexuality and identity as a woman, has earned her the sobriquet of Kerala's 'Queen of Erotica'.

*Getting a man to love you is easy
Only be honest about your wants as
Woman. Stand nude before the glass with him
So that he sees himself the stronger one
And believes it so, and you so much more
Softer, younger, lovelier. Admit your
Admiration. Notice the perfection
Of his limbs, his eyes reddening under
The shower, the shy walk across the bathroom floor,
Dropping towels, and the jerky way he
Urinate. 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 sweat between the breasts,
The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your
Endless female hungers. Oh yes, getting
A man to love is easy, but living
Without him afterwards may have to be
Faced. A living without life when you move
Around, meeting strangers, with your eyes that
Gave up their search, with ears that hear only
His last voice calling out your name and your*

Body which once under his touch had gleamed

Like burnished brass, now drab and destitute. ²⁹

(The Looking Glass: *The Descendants*)

Das may sound modern and liberated because of her outspokenness in the matter of sex but hedonism can be seen in Sanskrit poetry where we find it in abundance and variety. While these observations are arguably true, it would be unfair to restrict the poet to a narrow confessionalism, while ignoring other significant dimensions that call for special consideration because of her unique place among the women poets of India. Kamala Das herself resents her slotting in the limited confines of sexual denominations and strongly disapproves of those who have stigmatized her as a sex symbol. “I have a number of social commitments, but everyone thinks only about sex in relation to my writing” ³⁰, she lamented.

Apart from marriage, which can be an important change in life and the role of husband or wife in a married life, sometimes the presence of another person can be more effective and can change the complete route of life. Kamala Das got married at the age of fifteen, as a punishment for not doing well in Maths and continued her married life lovelessly. The dominant emotion in Kamala Das’ poems is love. She is sentimental and idealistic when she speaks in mythological metaphors. In her book, *My Story*, she records her yearning thus:

I was looking for an ideal lover. I was looking for the one who went

to Mathura and forgot to return to his Radha. Perhaps I was seeking the cruelty that lies in the depths of a man's heart. Otherwise why did I not get my peace in the arms of my husband? ³¹

Many persons entered her life as lovers and she does not make any efforts to hide it.

*... love became a swivel-door,
When one went out, another came in
Then I lost count, for always in my arm
Was a substitute for a substitute.* ³²

(Substitute: *The Descendants*)

Kamala Das who was born in a conservative Hindu Nair (Nallappattu) family having royal ancestry, after being asked by her lover Sadiq Ali, an Islamic scholar and a Muslim League MP, embraced Islam in 1999 at the age of 65 and assumed the name Kamala Surayya. After converting, she wrote:

Life has changed for me since Nov. 14 when a young man named Sadiq Ali walked in to meet me. He is 38 and has a beautiful smile. Afterwards he began to woo me on the phone from Abu Dhabi and Dubai, reciting Urdu couplets and telling me of what he would do to me after our marriage. I took my nurse Mini and went to his place in my car. I stayed with him for three days. There was a sunlit

river, some trees, and a lot of laughter. He asked me to become a Muslim which I did on my return home. ³³

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, for her, converting to Islam was like a new birth. Later, she felt it was not worth it to change one's religion and said, "I fell in love with a Muslim after my husband's death. He was kind and generous in the beginning. But I now feel one shouldn't change one's religion. It is not worth it."³⁴

In 1951, Forough Farrokhzad at the age of sixteen married a cousin ten years senior to her, a man of some literary ambition, and nine months later, she gave birth to a child. The marriage ended in acrimonious divorce three years later, leaving her with her only natural child, a son named Kamyar. As was common practice in Iran, the court awarded custody rights to the father; in this case, Farrokhzad also lost visitation rights because the court judged her unfit to raise a child. The pariah status was to turn into a haunting force in Farrokhzad's life and poetry. She also like Kamala Das, had some short-lived relationships but finally she also met that most effective person in her life. In Tehran, Farrokhzad soon became the sole woman among a group of Iranian poets and writers experimenting with new artistic forms and themes. Even in this company, her outspokenness and unconventional lifestyle were often barely tolerated.

Progressive journals and newspapers would run her poems alongside illustrations of a woman's naked body. More than one colleague boasted publicly about his romantic relationship with Farrokhzad. And when she fell in love and maintained an eight-year-long passionate relationship with a married man, a controversial film-maker, producer and writer Ebrahim Golestan (b. 1922) , with whom she established a relationship that lasted until her death in an automobile accident at thirty-two years of age in February 1967; the relationship would be a constant subject of gossip and censure. Farrokhzad's 1958 friendship with Golestan led to the last most productive phase of her life, to the expansive vision she brought to bear on her art and the uncanny aesthetic quality she instilled in her work.

Feminism, as a term conjures pictures of women's liberation movement of the West. But basically, it is a social movement which has roots in all the continents of the world. Feminism mainly challenged the male point of view. The protest is both radical and rational. This women's struggle started getting reflected in literature, politics, films and other allied visual media. In the West, "Holding the social structures responsible for women's lot, they view womanhood as something to be celebrated rather than changed or hidden. In other words, they vehemently claim that women are superior to men."³⁵ But in India, woman accepts man as a complementary figure. All she tries to achieve is an 'identity' for herself. She need not be always dubbed as somebody else's daughter, wife or mother. She should be respected for her own personality. This

struggle or awakening has started reflecting in the literature produced by women in the early sixties. Many 'men critics' dubbed this kind of feminist point of view as 'gynocriticism'. For them, feminism implies losing femininity. Women who have conviction in feminism as an ideology need not be unfeminine in their attitude. Retaining their femininity, they can still protest against ideas and actions, which hamper their personality. According to the article – *Kamala Das: Through A Different Lens* by Bhargavi P. Rao(1944-2008), Kamala Das' poems can be an excellent example to prove the above point of view. She is sensitive, sensuous, dreamy and feminine in every sense of the word, yet her poems project her as a feminist. Her confrontation with social taboos, and her protest against the false values imposed on her in the name of morals is reflected in her poems.

In patriarchal system, man is the origin and the measure of the Perfect Man and in contrast, female is appendage and marginal. Based on this binary opposition, the female is in contrast with male that compared to him, has no value. Iranian women, almost in all areas of their life, were pressed down and were forced to accept the inferior status in the society, and with their silence have confirmed the title namely, 'Weak'. The Iranian women have traditionally been deprived of many of their basic rights and have suffered from both male centred ideologies and male dominance that treat women as irrational, child-like and immature, and from widespread discriminatory policies that affect their lives from birth to death. Women's fight for their civil, constitutional and human

rights have been in the core of women's movement in Iran for about a century, from the early twentieth century to the beginning of twenty first century. During the Islamic Revolution of 1979, Iranian women participated in massive numbers in street demonstrations and expedited the victory of the Revolution but there were not gender differences and gender expectations in the participation and expectations of women during this great massive social event. Several factors such as religious rituals, traditional training, families' strictness on girls, low levels of women's education, and social, political and legal inferiority resulted in the feminist movements in Iran. In terms of showing reality and expressing feminine emotions, no woman poet can compete with Forough Farrokhzad.

Forough was proud of being a woman and has been saying that, "I'm luckily a woman." ³⁶ She showed that, for those Iranian women who have something to say and the required courage, all boundaries and limitations are ridiculous. According to Reza Baraheni (1996), Farrokhzad was the first woman in Iranian literature who revolted against the patriarchy through a woman's poetic art. This rebelliousness has been mirrored in both her personal life and her career. At her three preliminary poem collections – *The Captive*, *The Wall*, and *The Rebellion*, as she herself declared, she has feminist point of view; she dreamed the equality of rights for the women of her country, she knew their sufferings and as she said in an interview in 1954: "I try my best to devote half of my art to show their pains." ³⁷ But during the time, as she became matured in her poetry, the matter of gender became less-colour and instead of those feminist opinions, in an

interview with Iraj Gorgin in 1964, she just declared her thoughts as a feminine sensibility and says: “Obviously, due to my psychological and ethical make-up—and, for instance, the fact of my being a woman, I view things differently. I’m luckily a woman but when we are talking about artistic values, the gender is not important really.”³⁸

Kamala Das also in an interview with Suresh Kohli in 2006, in reply of his question based on some critics called her as a feminist, answered: “Yes, I have been. I am not a feminist, as it is generally understood. I feel a woman is most attractive when she surrenders to her man. She is incomplete without a man.”³⁹

The researcher believes that these two poets were more iconoclasts rather than being a pure feminist. Both had similar concerns about women’s rights in their respective societies, but if we look at their poems, whenever they talk generally about ‘woman’, we can find a trace of feminism or protest against the social boundaries, patriarchy, male supremacy, or even a call to get rid of the domination of men. In *The Conflagration*, Kamala Das says:

Woman, is this happiness, this lying buried
Beneath a man? It’s time again to come alive
*The world extends a lot beyond his six-foot frame.*⁴⁰

(The Conflagration: *The Descendants*)

Whereas, in *The Looking Glass*, she invites women to

... Stand nude before the glass with him
So that he sees himself the stronger one
And believes it so, and you so much more
Softer, younger, lovelier.
... Gift him all,
Gift him what makes you woman, the scent of
Long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts,
The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your
Endless female hungers. ⁴¹

(The Looking Glass: *The Descendants*)

Forough Farrokhzad also, when is angry of the social injustice, encourages the women to rise up for their rights:

Sister, rise up after your freedom,
why are you quiet?
rise up because henceforth
you have to imbibe the blood of tyrannical men.

Seek your rights, Sister,
from those who keep you weak,
from those whose myriad tricks and schemes
keep you seated in a corner of the house.

How long will you be the object of pleasure

In the harem of men's lust?

how long will you bow your proud head at his feet

like a benighted servant?

How long for the sake of a morsel of bread,

will you keep becoming an aged haji's temporary wife,

seeing second and third rival wives.

oppression and cruelty, my sister, for how long?

This angry moan of yours

must surly become a clamorous scream.

you must tear apart this heavy bond

so that your life might be free.

Rise up and uproot the roots of oppression.

give comfort to your bleeding heart.

for the sake of your freedom, strive

*to change the law, rise up.*⁴²

(To My Sister, Book 2: The Wall)

But, at her private moments, fulfilled with love, substitutes the word 'woman' to 'I' and admires the beauty of her beloved:

*Your shoulders are
like hard and prideful cliffs
the waves my hair in their steepness
fall like a fall of light*

*Your shoulders are
like the walls of a massive castle
the dancing threads of my hair on them
is like those of willow branches in the hands of a breeze*

*Your shoulders are
like steel towers
the amazing reflection of life and blood
its colour, the colour of a copper stove*

*In the silence of the temple of the lust
I'm lying restless beside you
the scar of my kisses on your shoulders
are like scars of fiery snakes bites*

*Your shoulders
in the culmination of hot splendid sun
glitters like the summits of the mountain
under the warm and bright drops of sweat*

*Your shoulders
are the altar of my desirous eyes
your shoulders
are my prayer stone for prostration* ⁴³

(The Song of Beauty, Book 3: The Rebellion)

Nevertheless, we can see a dualism in their poems, from one hand, the poets' lives and writings are a source of tremendous hope and strength for hundreds of women who have not been able to speak out, or about their experiences, and from other side, they claim to be 'feminine' rather than a 'feminist'. However, we cannot deny that they had similar concerns in regard to women's rights in their respective societies.

And there comes the question of identity. What is a woman? A basic question that every woman has to face. Kamala Das speaks of the woman's identity in many of her poems. She writes of roles and modules the society expects of a woman. She seems to reject them although she does not offer any alternative. A woman is a woman but her secret desire to be a male finds expression in Kamala Das' poetry. After her first confrontation with a male and perhaps her defloration:

*Then ... I wore a shirt and my
Brother's trousers, cut my hair short and ignored
My womanliness* ⁴⁴

(Introduction: The Old Playhouse and Other Poems)

But then girls are supposed to be girl-like. Who wants a tomboy? Society wants conformity:

...Dress in sarees, be girl

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

Be a quarreler with servants. Fit in. Oh,

Belong, cried the categorizer. Don't sit

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

Be Amy or be Kamala or better

Still, be Madhavikutty. It is time to

*Choose a name, a role. Don't play pretending games.*⁴⁵

(An Introduction: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

The society and family impose a name and role on woman and she has to carry it. Kamala questions it. Why should she have a name given by someone else? Why cannot she have her own existence and personality? Now this name is the role that she has to live and she is weighed down by it:

I have a name, had it for thirty

Years, chosen by someone else

For convenience...

.....

...Why? Why should I remember or bear

That sweet-sounding names, pinned to

Me, a medal undeservingly

Gained.....

You ask of

Me a silly thing. Carry

This gift of a name like a corpse and

Totter beneath its weight

And perhaps even fall ... I who love

*This gift of life more than all!*⁴⁶

(Spoiling the Name: *Summer in Calcutta*)

Kamala Das questions the traditional role of woman as a good wife, mother and householder. But because at some special and sensual moments of love, her feminine sensations prevails; so, she cannot be the woman's liber. Although she is revolting against the limiting social norms and male-dominated society but in a man, she just looks for love; neither his name, nor his role. In many poems she speaks of this return to the lover, imperfect though he maybe:

...your love is

A morass where I must sink. If not today,

Tomorrow ...

.....

...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,
Your flawed beauty is my only refuge,
O love me, love me, love me till I die ...*⁴⁷

(Morning at Apollo Pier: *Only the Soul Knows How to Sing*)

Forough was the product of a repressive society, which had closed all the doors to voices that she tried to promote: moderation, inclusion, freedom of speech, and freedom itself. Forough was one of these thinkers who experienced this suppression within her modern family life and society. She as an individual and poet captures the repression of women and people, without slogans. Her politics was her body and her experience as a woman, and her message was against traditional society, which was in a macabre dance with modernity. Her struggle was to expose all hypocrisy regardless of their names and isms. Her poetry runs against the social and ancient norms and attitudes of a male society, which prevented her from being herself. From the time she began writing, she searched for the space of selfhood. She started from the simplicity of a young and inexperienced poet and insisted to become an experienced poet and woman, in order to declare herself to the world. This is explicit in her last work. She changed herself and the world around her in the course of ten years, and sat to enjoy the freedom that she worked so hard and paid so gravely for.

I must say something

I must say something

In the shivering moment at daybreak

When space blends with something strange

Like the portents of puberty

I want

To surrender to some revolt

I want

To pour down out of that vast cloud

I want

To say no no no. ⁴⁸

(Eternal Sunset, Book 4: Another Birth)

In modern Iranian literature, Forough Farrokhzad, undoubtedly, occupies a pivotal position. Her poetry presents the singular voice of an Iranian woman who dared to challenge the social and patriarchal boundaries imposed on Iranian women for centuries. Farrokhzad's pioneering artistic career and her bold lifestyle created an unprecedented legacy for the woman artist in Iran. Her work defies all categories as she not only confronted the stereotypes forced on Iranian women's identity, but she also challenged the long-established tradition of the classic Persian poetry. In both arenas, Farrokhzad proved herself resilient and uncompromising. Her unique poetic voice articulates inclusion in literary and social activism and subversion from the mainstream male-dominated literary

circles. Confronting the individual and collective definitions of identity, and sexual and textual territories, Farrokhzad broke many boundaries and expressed the need for self-awareness and affirmation of female identity.

I am sending-

my warmest greetings to the sun,

and to the tender rivers that streamed in my veins,

and to the raining clouds that forever carried- my endless dreams-

to the other side.

Also,

my greetings go-

to the poplar trees in the yard-

and their sore but graceful aging-

under the comes and goes of sun:

They escorted me in all chilly visits-

of dry times.

And,

I am sending my greetings to the dark crowd of crows:

They always brought me the refreshing scent of nightly crows.

And,

my greetings go to my mother-

who stayed and lived in the mirror,

and looked like my aged face.

*And my greetings to this earth, this generous earth-
that the thrill of repeating me, filled its aroused inside- with countless
greening seeds.*

I will come, I will come, I will come!

With my flowing locks: the winged scent of Earth;

With my eyes: the bright insight of Night.

And I will bring to you-

all the flowers that I picked-

from the other side of the wall.

I will come, I will come, I will come!

And then,

all the closed gates will be shattered by Love,

And all the forsaken isles will be invaded by Love,

And there, I will greet everybody who loves.

And, I know:

There will be a girl,

still standing in front of the gates,

those soaked gates-

in the Deluge of Love.

I will greet her again as well.⁴⁹

Please your man is the poets' professed message, but remember your power to please him, is the underlying and empowering purpose. However, Forough Farrokhzad also like Kamala Das had some emotional and sensual moments in her private life that the solution lied in love and the power of love prevails to the protesting against men. Even though men are selfish, supercilious, inconsiderate, egoist, and narcissist, love has a liberating influence and it is capable to transcend ego to that level which to be defeated in the power of the lover can be pleasant.

...My beloved

like a nature

has a frank inevitable concept.

He confirmed

the honest rule of power

by overcoming me...⁵⁰

(My Beloved, Book 4: Another Birth)

Both Das and Farrokhzad celebrate death, welcome it, yearn for it, and even embrace it by committing suicide. Death is considered an act through which a female poet can achieve a place and a voice of her own within the phallogentric domain of language. The act of writing is the identification with the paternal but the act of writing poetry, the language of revolution, renders the death wish inevitable. However, here the desire for death is the desire to unite with the

maternal and the semiotic, paying the price of having a voice. As Farrokhzad says, "it is only the voice that will last".⁵¹ This voice strongly links the poetry of Das and Farrokhzad through themes of death and rebirth.

The confessional poets were dubbed as neurotics by the society, as they did not follow any tradition nor respected any conventions. They wanted to be unique and not a part of the conventional social set up. This conflict with the society leads them to introspection. In the course, comes a breaking point when they could not compromise with themselves. They lose themselves helplessly in the battle and start searching for the lost self. This conflict has given birth to a number of beautiful poems. The sensitive poet cannot take failure for granted. At this juncture, life becomes unbearable and the call of death becomes irresistible. They are more than convinced that death can offer them more solace than life.

‘Death’ is the common theme where both the poets meet; of course, both Das and Farrokhzad were saved. Kamala Das considers death a reward for all her pains in surviving upon the earth. Her autobiography gives ample evidence to her idea of death by water, drowning oneself in the sea. The relevant passage reads thus,

Often I have toyed with the idea of drowning myself to be rid of my loneliness which is not unique in any way, but is natural to all. I have wanted to find rest in the sea and an escape from

*involvements.*⁵²

Her autobiography records her attempted suicide twice. She looks upon sea as a friend, philosopher and guide,

Bereft of soul

My body shall be bare.

Bereft of body

My soul shall be bare.

Which would you rather have

O kind sea?

Which is the more dead

Of the two?

I throw the bodies out,

I cannot stand their smell.

Only the souls may enter

The vortex of sea.

Only the souls know how to sing

At the vortex of the sea.

...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.*⁵³

(The Suicide: *The Descendants*)

Kamala Das knew the answer to the question as she was aware that her soul had been killed and she only wanted to get out of her physical body. But the streak of love was stronger which pulled her from the jaws of death:

I tell you, sea,

I have enough courage to die,

But not enough.

Not enough to disobey him

Who said: Do not die

*And hurt me that certain way.*⁵⁴

(The Suicide: *The Descendants*)

Bruce King traces dualism in her poems, which he thinks is responsible for her attitude towards death. According to him in her writing, soul is contrasted to body. She seems to imagine overcoming this dualism only through death; her poems are filled with longings to die, especially to drown in the sea. The dualism results from the fall of childhood innocence into the adult world of sexuality, marriage and life among strangers, especially an uncaring husband. The frustration was because she failed to 'act' as a happy woman.

*I must pose,
I must pretend,
I must act the role
of happy woman,
happy wife.*⁵⁵

(The Suicide: *The Descendants*)

Finally, Kamala Das, a pillar of Indian English Literature, an artist and a versatile Malayalam writer passed away at the age of 75 in Pune, May 31st, 2009. In her death, India has lost a great writer and poet who in many ways often is misread, misunderstood and mistreated. She has no wonder, revived and modernized the old concept of love. Kamala Das wrote with such passion, her poetry remains iconoclastic, defying norms yet daring you to read.

*When I die
Do not throw the meat and bones 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.*⁵⁶

(A Request: *The Descendants*)

Farrokhzad's *Another Birth* and *Let's Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season* are seen by many Iranian critics, like Siroos Shamisa (1948), as volumes reflecting her desire for death. The poems of these collections address death in a nostalgic way. Even love is associated with death in these volumes. One of the reasons that death is portrayed so vividly in her poems is that she experienced suicide attempts during her life. Farrokhzad attempted to commit suicide three times. In one case, it was because her relationship with Iranian poet Nader Naderpour broke up. For the other two cases, no plausible reason can be found except that they happened because of the absence of a male figure, a beloved praised in Farrokhzad's later poetry.

Apparently, Farrokhzad fashioned her art out of anguish, breakdown, and a preoccupation with death apart from attention to the evolving 'Self', which characterizes her poetry. Images of the grave and the coffin that represent the maternal womb could be seen as the semiotic space in which the poetry of Farrokhzad meets to resurrect and fuse the revolutionary feminine voice. In her poetry death rhetoric seems to serve as a literary device for expressing anger and frustration about a woman's social roles. Death is associated with freedom and autonomy, followed by images of resurrection opposing images of destruction.

Farrokhzad's own death actually shocked Iran as the sudden, senseless tragedy of a growing, still youthful artist cut down before maturity and fulfilment. Some claimed that Farrokhzad deliberately crashed her car to cast

away her old life in order to start a new one. They point to the passages in *Let's Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season* that seem to be a prediction of the time of day, weather, and season of the year in which she would die, only to be 'born again'. The poem apparently exhibits exact details: the poet did die shortly after 4 p.m. on the February 13th, 1967 at the age of 32 and snow was falling during the graveside ceremonies on the 14th as she had noted in the poem.

*And this is me,
a lonely woman,
at the beginning of the cold season,
at the beginning of perceiving
of polluted existence of earth
and the simple and sad despair of heaven
and impotence of these concrete hands*

*Time passed,
time passed and the clock chimed four
it chimed four
today is the twenty-second day of December
I know the secret of seasons,
and understand the words of moments
the savoir is sleeping in his grave
and the earth,*

the receptive earth is an indication of tranquility

Time passes and the clock chimed four

The wind is blowing in the street

the wind is blowing in the street

and I am thinking about mating flowers

and blossoms with their tiny bloodless stems

and this tired tubercular time

and a man passing by the dank trees

a man, the lines of whose blue veins

has crept up the two sides of his throat

like dead snakes

and in his throbbing temples

those bloody syllables and repeated:

-hello

-Hello

And I am thinking about mating flowers

At the beginning of a cold season,

in the mourning assembly of mirrors

and bereaved congregation of pallid experiences

and in the evening pregnant with science

how can one cry stop

at someone

who walks so patiently,

so gravely,

so bewildered

how can you tell the man that he is not alive

that he has never been alive

The wind is blowing in the street

lonely crows of solitude,

circle through old gardens of boredom

and the ladder is so low!

They took with them the entire simplicity of a heart

to the palace of tales

and now how,

how will one rise to dance

and drop his childhood hair

in the flowing streams

and trample beneath his feet

the apple that she has finally picked and smelled ?

O friend O most beloved friend!

What black clouds await the day

The sun holds a feast!

It was as if in the course of an imaginary flight

one day a bird appeared

it was as if those new leaves that were breathing

in the lust of breeze

were green lines of imagination

as if those violet flames that burned

in the pure mind of windows

were nothing but the innocent delusion of lamps

The wind is blowing though the street

this is the beginning of ruin

the wind was blowing on that day too,

when your hands were ruined

O darling stars

O darling cardboard stars

When lies start blowing in the sky

how can one take refuge

in the verses of disgraced prophets?

we reach each other like the dead of millions years

and then the sun will judge the decay of our bodies

I am cold

I am cold, as I will never be warmed

O friend, O most beloved friend!

how old is that wine?

look here

how heavy is the time

and how the fish nibble at my flesh?

why do you keep me always at the bottom of the sea?

I am cold and wary of shell earrings

I am cold and know

that nothing will remain

from all the red illusions of a wild anemone

But a few drops of blood

I will leave off the lines

and will also leave off the counting of numbers

and from amid limited geometric forms

I will speak refuge in the sensual spaces of vastness

I am naked, naked, naked

like moments of silence

Between my naked phrases of love

And all my wounds are due to love

To love, love, love

I have let this wandering island pass

through the revolution of ocean

And eruption of the mountain

And the shattering of the secret of that united being

whose humblest particles were born from the sun

Hello O innocent night!

Hello O night. The eyes of desert wolves

you transform into bony cavities of faith and belief

along the brooks, the soul of willow trees

smell the kind soul of axes

I come from the indifferent world of thoughts and words

and sounds

and this world resembles the nest of snakes

and this world resounds with footsteps of people

while they kiss you

they weave the rope of gallows for your neck in their

minds

Hello O innocent night!

between the window and seeing ,

there is always a distance

why did I not look

like that time when a man was passing by the dank tress?

Why did I not look

It was as if Mother had wept that night

I mean that when I suffered convulsing pain

and the fetus took shape

that night I became the bride of acacia clusters

that night Isfahan resounded with the echo of blue tiles

and the one who was my other half had returned into my

fetus

and I saw him in the mirror

he looked pure and bright like the mirror

and suddenly he called me

and I became the bride acacia clusters

it was as if mother had wept that night

a light rose in this closed window!

why did I not look?

all moments of happiness knew

that your hands would be ruined

and I did not look

until the clock's window opened

*and that melancholy canary chimed four
it chimed four
and I met that little woman
her eyes were like empty nests of phoenixes
and she walked with such a motion with her thighs
as if bearing to the bed of night
the maidenhood of my glorious dream*

*Shall I comb my hair again
in the wind?
shall I plant violets in the gardens again
shall I lay geraniums
in the sky behind the window?
shall I dance again on the rims of glasses?
shall the doorbell ever carry me
towards the expectation of a sound?*

*I said to Mother, "It is all over now"
I said, "It always happens before you can think about it
We must post a condolence notice in the paper"*

*Hollow man
hollow man brimful of faith
look how his teeth lacerate*

when chewing

and his eyes

torn off while staring

and how he passes by the dank trees

patiently ,

gravely ,

Bewildered

At four

when the lines of his blue veins

creep up at the both sides of the throat

like dead snakes

and the bloody syllables

in his throbbing temples

repeat:

“Hello

Hello”

Have you

ever smelled those four blue tulips?...

Time passes

time passed and night fell over the naked acacia branches

night slipped behind the window

with its cold tongue

sucking the remaining day

Where do I come from?

where do I come from

why am I so smeared with the smell of night?

The turf over his grave is still fresh

I mean the grave of those two green and young hands

how kind you were, O most beloved friend?

how kind you were when you told lies

how kind you were when you shut the mirrors eyelids

and plucked the lights of the chandelier from their wiry stems

and plucked the lights of the chandelier

from their wiry stems

in the heavy darkness you took me pastures of love

until that giddy mist which as the continuation of fire

settles on the grass of sleep

And those cardboard stars

Rotted around eternity

Why was the voice pronounced vocally?

Why did you make your look a guest of the house of viewing!

*Why did they took the caress
to the shyness of virgin locks?
look how here
the soul of that man who spoke with words
and caressed with a glance
and rested from flight with a caress
has been crucified
on the poles of illusion
and how there remains,
the print of five branches of your fingers
like five letters of truth
on her cheek*

*What is silence? –what, what – O must beloved friend?
what is silence but unspoken words
I cannot speak
but the tongue of sparrows
are the tongues of life in the sentences uttered in the
nature's feast
the tongue of sparrows means spring, leaf, spring
the tongue of sparrows means breeze, perfume, breeze
the tongue of sparrows die in factories*

*who is he who walks upon the path of eternity
towards the moment of unity
who winds his eternal watch
with the mathematical logic of subtractions and divisions?*

*Who is he who does not believe in the cock's cry,
is the beginning of the heart of day?*

*Who is he who wears love's crown
But rots I her wedding gown?*

*So the sun did not shine after all
in a single instant
upon both poles of despair
you were denied the din the blue tiles*

And I am so full that they pray upon my voice...

*Happy corpses
weary corpse
silent thoughtful corpses
well-mannered corpses, well-dressed, well fed
in the stations of scheduled times
and in suspicious background of temporary lights
and the lust to buy rotten fruits of futility...*

ah

many people are worried of accidents at intersections

and this whistling sirens to stop

at a moment that a man must, must, must

be crushed under the wheels of time

the man passing by the dank trees...

Where do I come from?

I said to Mother, "It is all over now.

I said, "It always happens before you can think about it

We must post our condolence notice in the paper."

Hello O estrangement of loneliness

I surrender the room to you

because black clouds

are always prophets of fresh versus the purification

and in the martyrdom of a candle

there lies a bright secret

that the final and the tallest flame knows

Let us believe

let us believe in the beginning of the cold season

let us believe in the ruined garden of imagination

and the idle and overturned sickles

and the captive seeds

look how the snow is falling...

*Perhaps truth was those two young hands, those two young
hands*

that were buried beneath the incessant falling of snow

and next year they will blossom

when spring

makes love with the sky behind the window

and in its body bursts forth

green fountains of frolicking stems

O friend, O most beloved Friend!

Let us believe in the beginning of the cold season...⁵⁷

(Let's Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season,

Book 5: 'Let's Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season')

5.2. Contrast

Although this research is a comparative study of the poems of Forough Farrokhzad and Kamala Das, but existence of some differences in their points of views are undeniable. These various opinions are because of the different life styles and experiences they faced in their lives. In this part, the researcher tries to mention a few issues, which make their poetry different from each other.

While erotic and romantic themes were prominent in the early poems of Forough Farrokhzad, but in her two last collections – *Another Birth* and *Let's Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season*, her poetic vision took on a more explicitly social, political, and even epic tone. Many of Farrokhzad's last poems have been read as terrifyingly prescient not only of her death but also of Iran's fate in the late twentieth century. Catastrophe is suggested by the images of bleak physical landscapes, tortured bodies, and horrific silences.

No one minds the flowers
no one minds the fish
no one wants to believe
that the garden is dying
that the heart of the garden has swollen under the sun
that the mind of the garden is slowly, slowly
draining of green memories
and the garden's feeling
is some abstract thing
rotting in the garden's solitude
Our courtyard is alone
our courtyard yawns in expectation of a rain
from unknown cloud
and the pond of our house is empty

*Small inexperienced stars
fall down from the heights of trees to the earth
at night the sound of cough resounds in the houses
from the pale windows of the houses of fishes
our courtyard is alone*

Father says:

My days have gone

my days have gone

I have carried my load

I have done my job.

and in his room from dawn to dusk

he reads either Shahnameh (Book of Kings)

or Nasekh ol- tavarikh (World History)

Father says to mother:

Damn all the fishes and birds

when I am dead

what matters if the garden lives or dies

my pension is enough for me

All my mother's life is a prayer carpet

spread at the threshold of the fear of hell

Mother always looks for sin

*in the bottom of everything
and she thinks the garden has been polluted
by the sin of a sinister plant
she prays all day
Mother is a natural sinner
she prays all day and blows at all flowers
she prays and blows at all the fish
she prays and blows at herself
mother awaits the coming of the saviour
and the grace that will descend from the sky*

*My brother calls the garden a graveyard
he laughs at the chaos of the weeds
and counts the dead bodies of the fish
that turns to putrid particles
under the sick skin of water
my brother is addicted to philosophy
he sees the gardens cure
in its annihilation
he gets drunk
and punches at doors and walls
he tries to say he is weary,
filled with pain and despair,*

he carries his disappointment with him

to streets and to public places

like his ID card, his notebook

his handkerchief, lighter and pen

and his disappointment

is so small

that every night he loses it

in the bedlam of pubs

My sister who was a friend of flowers

and would carry – when mother beats her –

her simple words of her inner heart

to the kind and silent circle of flowers,

she would sometimes invite

the family of fishes to the party of sunshine and cookies

her house is on the other side of the town

she sings artificial songs

in her artificial house

with her artificial goldfish

under the shelter of her artificial husband's love

she bears natural babies

Whenever she comes to visit us

the corner of her skirt is defiled

by the garden's poverty
she takes a bath of eau-de-cologne,
whenever she comes to visit us
she is pregnant

Our courtyard is alone
our courtyard is alone
all day long behind the door
one can hear
the sound of shattering and explosion
all our neighbor's plant
machine guns and mortars instead of flowers
in their gardens
all our neighbors cover
the tiled ponds
and without their own wish
the tiled ponds
have become secret stores of gunpowder
and the kids in our district
have filled their satchels
with small bombs
our courtyard is giddy
I fear the time

that has lost its heart

I fear the thought of

The idleness of all these hands

And fear the estrangement of all these faces

I am alone

like student who

madly loves her geometry lessons

and I think one can take the garden to the hospital

I think...

I think

I think

And the heart of the garden has swollen under the sun

And the mind of the garden slowly, slowly

*Loses its green recollections*⁵⁸

(I Grieve for the Garden,

Book 5: Let's Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season)

If one of the functions of a novel is to illustrate the various and related aspects of a society in a specific period of time, this poem – *I Grieve for the Garden*, can play this role completely. Brief and concise, she demonstrates one public part of Iran society of her time – the executions: “Small inexperienced stars fall down from the heights of trees to the earth”, the political suppression:

“at night the sound of cough resounds in the houses / form the pale windows of the houses of fishes”, and the society: “has swollen under the sun”. The father: remained from the last generation, tiredly “reads either Shahnameh (Book of Kings) / or Nasekh ol- tavarikh (World History)” and his pension is enough for him; the mother a sample of a harassed, innocent and worried Iranian mother: “All my mother’s life is a prayer carpet / spread at the threshold of the fear of hell”. The brother, mute and disappointed “is addicted to philosophy ... and his disappointment is so small / that every night he loses it / in the bedlam of pubs”; the sister: woman, a favourite product of the middle class family who “her house is on the other side of the town / she sings artificial songs / in her artificial house”. And in this atmosphere, Forough hears the footfall of the history before its starting and does not regret anymore that instead of the flower which in the previous poems was the symbol of beauty, now “all our neighbor’s plant / machine guns and mortars instead of flowers / in their gardens / ... and the tiled ponds / have become secret stores of gunpowder”. At this time, the kids of her poem are not those simple and innocent kids of her previous poems, these children “have filled their satchels / with small bombs”.

But, Kamala Das in her collections is interested mostly in talking about her sexual exploitation, her physical life and moods of her body; for instance, we find fewer poems about social situation of India at that time rather than the unfair situation of Indian women in a traditional male-dominated society. If we look at her poem, *An Introduction*, as a clue to understanding Das’ poetry, we

will get that although she is conscious of the contemporary problems, but she is viewing them with detachment. She just could universalize her joys and sorrows, and correlate her own emotions with those of others.

*I don't know politics but I know the names
Of those in power, and can repeat them like
Days of week, or names of months, beginning with Nehru.
I am Indian, very brown, born in Malabar,
I speak three languages, write in
Two, dream in one.
Don't write in English, they said, English is
Not your mother-tongue. Why not leave
Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,
Every one of you? Why not let me speak in
Any language I like? The language I speak,
Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses
All mine, mine alone.
It is half English, half Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest,
It is as human as I am human, don't
You see? It voices my joys, my longings, my
Hopes, and it is useful to me as cawing
Is to crows or roaring to the lions, it
Is human speech, the speech of the mind that is*

*Here and not there, a mind that sees and hears and
Is aware. Not the deaf, blind speech
Of trees in storm or of monsoon clouds or of rain or the
Incoherent mutterings of the blazing
Funeral pyre. I was child, and later they
Told me I grew, for I became tall, my limbs
Swelled and one or two places sprouted hair.
When I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask
For, 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 breasts and womb crushed me.
I shrank pitifully.
Then ... I wore a shirt and my
Brother's trousers, cut my hair short and ignored
My womanliness. Dress in sarees, be girl
Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,
Be a quarreller with servants. Fit in. Oh,
Belong, cried the categorizers. Don't sit
On walls or peep in through our lace-draped windows.
Be Amy, or be Kamala. Or, better
Still, be Madhavikutty. It is time to*

Choose a name, a role. Don't play pretending games.

Don't play at schizophrenia or be a

Nympho. Don't cry embarrassingly loud when

Jilted in love ... 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. In him . . . the hungry haste

Of rivers, in me . . . the oceans' tireless

Waiting. Who are you, I ask each and everyone,

The answer is, it is I. Anywhere and,

Everywhere, I see the one who calls himself I

In this world, he is tightly packed like the

Sword in its sheath. It is I who drink lonely

Drinks at twelve, midnight, in hotels of strange towns,

It is I who laugh, it is I who make love

And then, feel shame, it is I who lie dying

With a rattle in my throat. I am sinner,

I am saint. I am the beloved and the

Betrayed. I have no joys that are not yours, no

Aches which are not yours. I too call myself I. ⁵⁹

Studying the poetry collections of Forough Farrokhzad from the beginning to end shows the poet's gradual developing transition from a mere sad complainer of the patriarchal and male-dominated society to a sympathetic social critic who understood her identity and comprehending the society, criticizes it fairly. Even the image of 'man' in her poems gradually has been transformed from a prisoner in her first collections to a beloved in her last collections. Instead of being the voice of her individual world, she became conscious of the great spirit of humankind. In Farrokhzad's first collection – *The Captive*, the speaker throughout the poems is a serious, searching, loving woman. The poems contain no philosophizing theme or full-blown descriptions of nature. The speaker reveals a spectrum of moods: anticipation, regret, joy, remorse, loneliness, abandon, repentance, doubt, and reverie. But the immediate issue is love, a woman's love for a man that makes the heart ache and that can satisfy all needs. Men appear in various stances, from proud, possessive, uncomprehending, faithless conquerors of the body to selfless lovers of whom the speaker feels unworthy. The domestic settings seem reflective of conflicting emotions and doubts Forough Farrokhzad experienced as a feminine character – young wife, mother, and poet. Her second volume of verse – *The Wall*, seems very Iranian in mood and reflective of emotional states natural for an Iranian woman in the poet's circumstances. In *The Captive*, Farrokhzad depicts her plight as an individual, whereas in *The Wall* she treats her state and sense of captivity. In her third collection – *The Rebellion*, the poems exhibit significant

differences from those in the earlier collections. First, in several of them Old Testament, Quranic, and traditional Persian literary imagery not so evident in earlier poems creates a poetic texture new to Farrokhzad. Second, the female speaker occasionally expresses concerns about her own death. Third, the collection as a whole embodies a mood and anger reminiscent of Khayyam's in Edward FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*. As feminine as the perspectives and as female as the content of her later poems were, modernist male and female readers in Iran alike have felt that the speakers of poems in *Another Birth* and *Let's Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season* – her fourth and fifth collections, voice their aspirations, joys, sorrows, problems, and dilemmas. In addition, in many of her poems, Farrokhzad's poetic personae no longer seem to represent merely her autobiographical self in the expression of feelings and views, but rather all Iranians with similar feelings. In other words, her feminine personae are transformed in these poems into a spokesperson, female to be sure, but voicing an anti-patriarchal clarion call that knows no gender.

But in Kamala Das' poetry collections, we cannot trace a developing line; it means, a path which shows a kind of evolution in her thoughts is not clear. Revolting against the social boundaries and being conscious of the contemporary problems, she views at them with detachment and her prominent themes have always been the shadowy borderline between fulfilment and unfulfilment in love and looking for an ideal love / lover. She has a moody mind

and in her poems, we are swept along by frequently alternating moods of celebration and frustration basically about love. This vagueness and instability halt the reader's mind to remember some of her poems, which reveal the different aspect of her mind. For instance, in *An Introduction*, we got to know about her life philosophy, which is based on Vedantic concept of 'Thou art me' or in Radha, she shows her religious interest to Lord Krishna that "I am melting, melting, melting / Nothing remains but / You".

Another difference that is more apparent in the poetry of Kamala Das rather than Forough Farrokhzad, is her paradoxical points of view about some issues. In 1991 and after being asked by her lover, Sadiq Ali, she embraced Islam at the age of 65. One of the reason of this fundamental decision was that she liked being behind the protective veil of purdah. This sense of feeling safe by being hidden behind a veil is a paradox against her confessional, self-revealed, and frank nature, which is so obvious in her literary works such as her poems and her autobiography – *My Story*. If she felt safe, by hiding her face and body then how she could clearly talk about her private moments with her lovers or describe some sexual images without feeling unsafe? Or according to her words, converting to Islam was like a new birth for her, then how later on she felt that it was not worthy to change her religion? On the other hand, how a person who warns "Woman, is this happiness, this lying buried / beneath a man?"⁶⁰ can invite them to "Stand nude before the glass with him / ... Gift him all / Gift him what makes you woman...".⁶¹ If all these notions and actions are not the

products of a paradoxical mind, then how else a reader can interpret them? Forough Farrokhzad with all her explicitness is not as frank as Kamala Das, but at least her poems are not paradoxical. When she encourages the women to rise and “Seek your rights, sister / from those who keep you weak / from those whose myriad tricks and schemes / keep you seated in a corner of the house”,⁶² she also did this effort for her life which will be mentioned in the following lines.

The other difference between these two poets, which in any way affected their poetry, is their confrontation with their married life. Both of them got married very soon – Forough Farrokhzad with love and Kamala Das without love and after a while both of them became unhappy because of their husbands; but what was their reaction about this matter? Forough could not accept the conventional limitations, which could have made her to quit poetry, and got divorced after three years. Because of her vast eagerness to poetry, she even had to leave her only child. Her father did not accept her at his home and she had to live alone without money until she could find a job but she never betrayed herself and her idea about being a poet. Forough Farrokhzad never looked at her art as a profession to make money. Although, she experienced some relationships but never assumed them as the materials of her writings. She dedicated her second collection –*The Wall*, to her former husband "in memory of our shared past, and with the hope that this worthless gift of mine can be a token of my gratitude to his boundless kindness."⁶³, but she never accepted to

continue a married life without any remained love; she was honest to herself and her life.

*Do not seal my lips with the lock of silence
for I've an untold story in my heart to complain
unlock this heavy chain from my feet
my heart is furious with this pain*

*Come on, O man, selfish man come along
and open the doors of the cage
if you have jailed me for a lifelong
liberate me for a while*

*I am that bird that wished to fly long since
my song changed into moan in my sorrowful chest
my life ended with regret and virulence
with all the pains stored in my breast*

*Seal not my lips with the lock of silence
because I must reveal my mystery
I must announce to all people of the world
the fiery echo of my song*

*Come, open the door, and let me to wing
towards the bright sky of poem*

*I will appear as a flower in the garden of poetry
if you let me fly*

*My lip with all its sweet kisses, yours
my body with all its perfumes, yours
my look with all its sparkles, yours
my heart with all its bloody moans, yours*

*But O man, O selfish being, shameless
do not say your poem is a cause for shame
have you ever known that in this cage the space
is narrow and narrow?*

*Say not your poem was sin will you,
let me have a chalice of this sin and shame
I let paradise and all its gifts for you
To the depth of hell you condemn*

*A book, isolation, a poem and silence
would be enough for me to feel the beauty of life
no matter if I have no way towards the paradise
because I bear in my heart a never ending paradise*

*When the moon playfully dances
in the vague silent sky at night
you are asleep and I am giddy with my lust
then I embrace the body of moonlight*

*Breeze has kissed me a thousand kisses
I endowed the sun with thousand of kisses
in the prison that you were its jailor
one night my body trembled with a kiss*

*O man throw away the account of your reputation
disgrace has offered me a giddy enjoyment
God would grant boon and salvation
who himself has granted the poet, a crazy heart*

*Come and open the door for me to fly
towards the bright sky of poetry
if you allow me to fly
I will blossom in the garden of poetry ⁶⁴*

(Rebellion, Book 1: The Captive)

Educated privately, Kamala Das was married off at her fifteen “as a punishment for not being able to do well in math.”⁶⁵ Without being aware or even capable of comprehending the physical and emotional implications of her

changed status, the poet deploras that she was thrown unceremoniously into the ‘murky waters’ of matrimony and motherhood, which followed soon after:

*I was a child and later they
Told me I grew
... When
I asked for love not knowing what else to ask
For, 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.*⁶⁶

(An Introduction: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

It was a loveless, companionless marriage, more like ‘dry toast’. Her husband left her free to choose her own company and occupy herself as best as she could; but, strangely enough, she adds that it was a good relationship. On the other hand, in a paradoxical statement, she confesses in her interview with de Souza that although she wrote about men’s lust on her husband’s insistence that she makes it hot , she hated him for suggesting that she ought to write more voyeuristic delight than with serious poetic intent. Indeed, Mr.Das wanted her book, *My Story* to be highly sensational and provocative:

I don’t think my attitude to writing about sex has in any way embarrassed my husband. In fact, he encouraged me. He asked me to make it more sensational. I was the one who stopped at points,

who could not go beyond, I remember very clearly, I was sick and lying on my bed in Bombay Hospital and he came and said, “we need the money, write this sort of book”. I did, ‘My Story’ came to be. ⁶⁷

Thus, without qualms, the dignity of an ailing wife was put on sale. Nevertheless, Kamala does not deny relationships and admits that she could not have written without them. She does however emphasize, that she entered into relationships to find writing material.

In contrast with Forough Farrokhzad whom whatever did, was based on a sincere belief in the love of poetry, Kamala Das continued those mentioned paradoxical issues just to survive; she even told Shobha Warrier in a 1996 Rediff interview , that she wrote fictions or became a newspaper columnist just because “poetry doesn’t sell in this country”.^{III}

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Shahnaz Moradi Kouchi, *Forough Farrokhzad: A Miscellany*, Tehran, Ghatreh Publishers, 2005, (P: 447).
2. Iqbal Kaur, *Perspectives on Kamala Das' Poetry*, New Delhi, Intellectual Publishing House, 1995, (P: 70).
3. Shahnaz Moradi Kouchi, *Forough Farrokhzad: A Miscellany*, Tehran, Ghatreh Publishers, 2005, (P: 445).
4. Kamala Das, *The Descendants*, Calcutta, Writers Workshop, 1991, (P: 12).
5. Ibid. (P: 22).
6. Ibid. (P: 35).
7. Kamala Das, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*, Mumbai, Orient Longman, 2004, (P: 1).
8. Iqbal Kaur, *Perspectives on Kamala Das' Poetry*, New Delhi, Intellectual Publishing House, 1995, (P: 129).
9. Kamala Das, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*, Mumbai, Orient Longman, 2004, (P: 1).
10. Kamala Das, *The Descendants*, Calcutta, Writers Workshop, 1991, (P: 29).
11. Kamala Das, *Summer in Calcutta*, Kerala, D C Books, 2004, (P: 54).

-
12. Kamala Das, *The Descendants*, Calcutta, Writers Workshop, 1991, (P: 11).
 13. Kamala Das, *Summer in Calcutta*, Kerala, D C Books, 2004, (P: 22).
 14. Kamala Das, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*, Mumbai, Orient Longman, 2004, (P: 1).
 15. Ibid. (P: 1).
 16. Kamala Das, *The Descendants*, Calcutta, Writers Workshop, 1991, (P: 35).
 17. Ibid. (P: 22).
 18. Kamala Das, *Only the Soul Knows How to Sing*, Kerala, D C Books, 2006, (P: 59).
 19. Kamala Das, *The Descendants*, Calcutta, Writers Workshop, 1991, (P: 26).
 20. Kamala Das, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*, Mumbai, Orient Longman, 2004, (P: 21).
 21. Ibid. (P: 26).
 22. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 1: The Captive*, Trans. Mehdi Afshar, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 21).
 23. Shahnaz Moradi Kouchi, *Forough Farrokhzad: A Miscellany*, Tehran, Ghatreh Publishers, 2005, (P: 444).
 24. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 3: Rebellion*, Trans. Mehdi Afshar, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 43).

-
25. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 1: The Captive*, Trans. Mehdi Afshar, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 21).
 26. Kamala Das, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*, Mumbai, Orient Longman, 2004, (P: 26).
 27. Ibid. (P: 26).
 28. Iqbal Kaur, *Perspectives on Kamala Das' Poetry*, New Delhi, Intellectual Publishing House, 1995, (P: 90).
 29. Kamala Das, *The Descendants*, Calcutta, Writers Workshop, 1991, (P: 31).
 30. Mina Surjit Singh, *Six Women Poets – A Cross-cultural Study*, New Delhi, Prestige Books, 2003, (P: 109).
 31. Iqbal Kaur, *Perspectives on Kamala Das' Poetry*, New Delhi, Intellectual Publishing House, 1995, (P: 123).
 32. Kamala Das, *The Descendants*, Calcutta, Writers Workshop, 1991, (P: 12).
 33. Mina Surjit Singh, *Six Women Poets – A Cross-Cultural Study*, New Delhi, Prestige Books, 2003, (P: 114).
 34. Ibid. (P: 115).
 35. Bhargavi P. Rao, “Kamala Das: Through a Different Lens”, in *Perspectives on Kamala Das' Poetry*, New Delhi, Intellectual Publishing House, 1995, (P: 122).

-
36. Shahnaz Moradi Kouchi, *Forough Farrokhzad: A Miscellany*, Tehran, Ghatreh Publishers, 2005, (P: 440).
37. Poursan Farrokhzad, *The One Who's Like No One – About the Poet, Forough Farrokhzad*, Tehran, Caravan Publishing House, 2001, (P:17).
38. Ibid. (P: 29).
39. Kamala Das, Suresh Kohli, *Closure – Some Poems and a Conversation*, New Delhi, Harper Collins Publishers, 2009, (P: 74).
40. Kamala Das, *The Descendants*, Calcutta, Writers Workshop, 1991, (P: 26).
41. Ibid. (P: 31).
42. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 2: The Wall*, Trans. Mehdi Afshar, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 65).
43. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 3: Rebellion*, Trans. Mehdi Afshar, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 32).
44. Kamala Das, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*, Mumbai, Orient Longman, 2004, (P: 26).
45. Ibid. (P: 26).
46. Kamala Das, *Summer in Calcutta*, Kerala, D C Books, 2004, (P: 27).
47. Kamala Das, *Only the Soul Knows How to Sing*, Kerala, D C Books, 1996, (P: 40).
48. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 4: Another Birth*, Trans. Manavaz Alexanderian, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 57).

-
49. Ibid. (P: 96).
50. Ibid. (P: 54).
51. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 5: Let's Believe in the beginning of the Cold Season*, Trans. Manavaz Alexanderian, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 40).
52. Kamala Das, *My Story*, New Delhi, Harper Collins Publishers, 2009, (P: 187).
53. Kamala Das, *The Descendants*, Calcutta, Writers Workshop, 1991, (P: 7).
54. Ibid. (P: 7).
55. Ibid. (P: 7).
56. Ibid. (P: 11).
57. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 5: Let's Believe in the beginning of the Cold Season*, Trans. Manavaz Alexanderian, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 5).
58. Ibid. (P: 28).
59. Kamala Das, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*, Mumbai, Orient Longman, 2004, (P: 26).
60. Kamala Das, *The Descendants*, Calcutta, Writers Workshop, 1991, (P: 26).
61. Ibid. (P: 31).
62. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 2: The Wall*, Trans. Mehdi Afshar, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 65).

63. Ibid. (P: 1).
64. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 1: The Captive*, Trans. Mehdi Afshar, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 40).
65. Iqbal Kaur, *Perspectives on Kamala Das' Poetry*, New Delhi, Intellectual Publishing House, 1995, (P: 164).
66. Kamala Das, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*, Mumbai, Orient Longman, 2004, (P: 26).
67. Mina Surjit Singh, *Six Women Poets – A Cross-Cultural Study*, New Delhi, Prestige Books, 2003, (P: 116).

LINKS AND WEBSITES

I. Translated by Iran Chamber Society, “Call to Arms”, Persian Language and Literature, Forough Farrokhzad – The Most Famous Woman in the History of Persian Literature, Web. 10.12.2012.

<http://www.iranchamber.com/literature/ffarrokhzad/forough_farrokhzad.php#arms>

II. Translated by Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, “The Sin”, Forough Farrokhzad’s Open Forum Website, 8, Web. 15.03.2013.

<<http://www.foroughfarrokhzad.org/selectedworks/selectedworks8.asp>>

III. Shobha Warriar, "Manipulation Is Not a Bad Word All the Time – The Rediff Interview with Kamala Das, 1996, Web. 01.03.2013.

<<http://www.rediff.com/news/1996/3107adas.htm>>

IV. Seyyedeh Tavoos Rahmani, "Thought of Forough Farrokhzad from the *Rebellion to Another Birth*, Science Road Publishing Corporation, Trends in Advanced Science and Engineering, ISSN: 2251-6557, TASE 6(1) 88-93, 2012, Journal homepage: <http://www.sciroad.com/ntase.html>, Web. 10.03.2013.

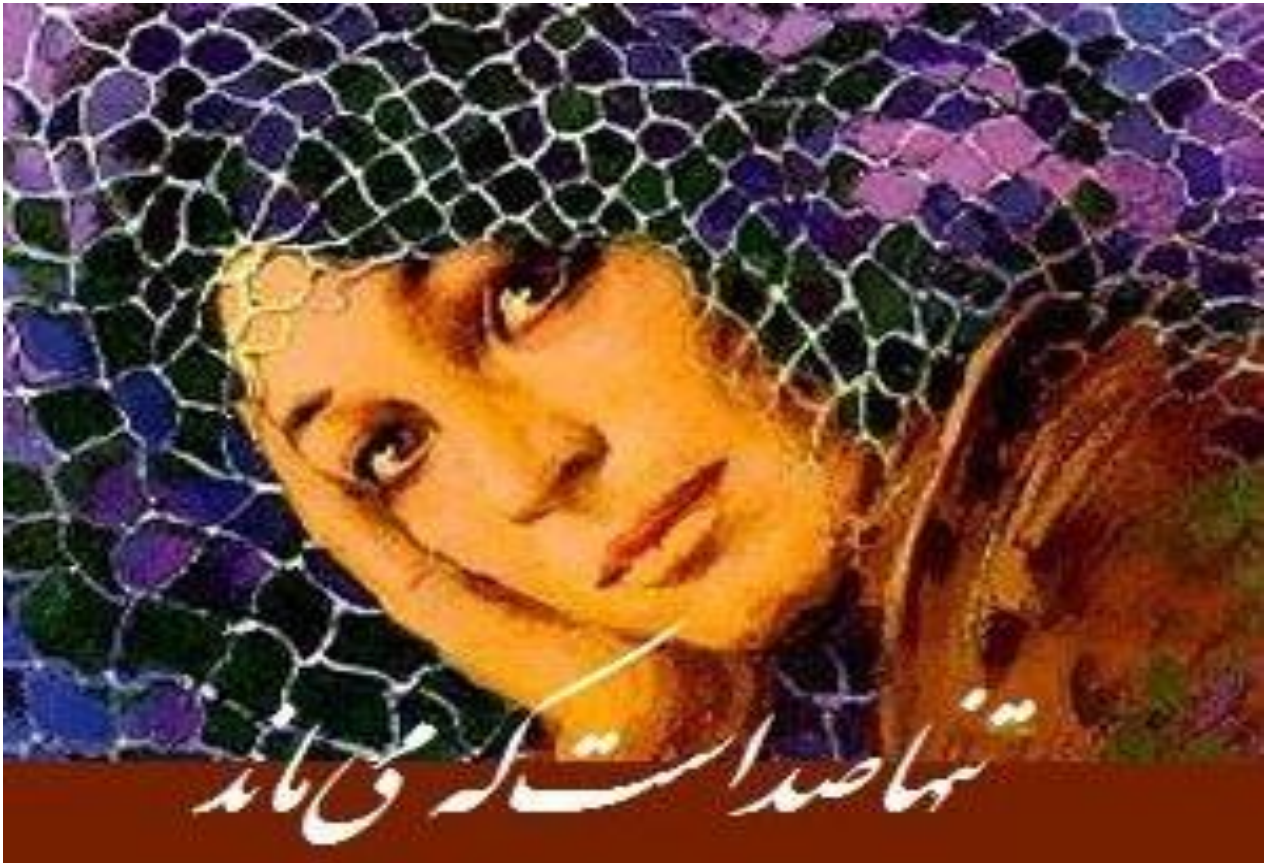
<<http://www.sciroad.com/TASE/TASE1261/TASE-12118.pdf>>

V. www.google.com

VI. www.wikipedia.com

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS



Chapter VI

Conclusions

Women's movements and writings have certainly made women more cognizant of their own inequality and have brought to public attention the violence and indignity, which has informed women's dependent status within family and society. Focusing on the many subtle ways in which the lived experiences of women have been sieved out as extraneous, irrelevant and sometimes even anomalous to a sanitized account of history, women's writings have prized open the complexities, which are shrouded in universalistic histories, wherein oppressive practices have been silenced. Public policies and plan perspectives relating to women's issues reflect and reinforce an ideology, which locates women's agencies firmly within national, religious and cultural boundaries. Further, circumscribed by the boundaries of community, women are received as members of society based on their socially useful role as mothers, which is considered women's supreme function in life, thereby submerging them in an inviolable biological determinism.

Two key concepts that provide a framework for the analysis of power and the manner, in which it unfolds in ruling practices creating deeply entrenched hierarchies, are 'gender' or sexual difference and 'patriarchy' defined by Adrienne Rich as the power of the father. Notions of equality and justice are enmeshed in the intricate web of these hierarchies having wide ramifications for

what it means to be a woman. As women's experience is different from men's, they write not only out of that difference, that is their feminine consciousness, but also out of their difference of view and standard in a social order in which they are 'alien,' 'other' or marginal, to the standard referent.

Women critics have been particularly concerned with focusing on just where lies that difference, the rift experienced by women writers in a patriarchal society, where language, itself may re-inscribe the structure by which they are oppressed, is also uncovered by some recurring narrative strategies that are discernible and demonstrable in women's writing. Women's writing very often transgresses the boundaries laid down by a patriarchal ideology that inscribes the notion of virgin, wife, mother, on to women. This comes to represent everything a woman is 'supposed' to be-sympathetic, charming, utterly unselfish, domestic, self-sacrificing and above all, *pure*, even if the nature is factitious. The tradition of women's writing thus becomes an exit from the sacred to the profane. Innocent, angelic and nubile creatures miraculously metamorphose into 'sinful' adventuresses. In the course of fulfilling their desires as writers, they are forced to hurt or fail those they love most and bring upon themselves anxiety, unhappiness, loneliness, alienation, solipsism and public censure, for having silenced the 'feminine' and sacrificed their ancient consciousness of silent suffering because people, not angels create art. In their attempts to transcend the imprisoning patriarchal determinants of gender and culture, these writers no longer suffer in silence but seek to educate themselves

about their own true natures/selves, as well as about the lies that have been foisted on them, through centuries of historic distortions and control. Since experience forms the basis of female creativity, it is important for women writers to realize that the self, whatever that self may be, is the basis upon which they must work, for it alone can be the source of their greatest authority and strength.

6.1. Main Findings in the Poems of Forough Farrokhzad

Towards the middle of the twentieth century, a new tradition of women's poetry came into being in Iran; a tradition of women intensely involved in self-reflection and self-revelation, not sheltered or restrained by the anonymity or opacity of a veil; a tradition of women who not only revealed themselves but also unveiled men in their writings. The list includes, among others, Zand-Dokht Shirazi (1911-1952), Jaleh Esfahani (b.1921), Parvin Dowlatabadi (b.1922), Simin Behbahani (b.1927), Lo'bat Vala Sheybani (b. 1930) Mahin Sekandari (b. 1940), Forough Farrokhzad (1935-1967), and Tahereh Saffarzadeh (b.1936).

These women wrote about hitherto private, autobiographical ideas and feelings. With body unveiled and pen in hand, they led the reader behind walls and veils to the domain of the private. They strove to reconcile the emotional, sensual, and social aspects of a female self. In their works, the authorial voice is neither subordinated to stereotypes nor hidden according to prescribed rules of psychological and social distance. Feelings are not rationalized, passions are not

diluted, emotions are not flattened, details are not evaded, and men are not absent. These writings created, to varying degrees, a sense of self divorced from the conventional definition of womanhood in Iran, a self that is all the more vulnerable in a society where walls and veils have been customary and censored communication.

Women's claims to personal rights and independence created unprecedented problems in a society where the age-old male-centred value, especially in the sexual domain, had remained intact. Blurred now was the boundary between masculine and feminine realms, and blurred with it was any sense of stability. The clear distinction between maleness/femaleness, permitted/forbidden, purity/pollution, honor/shame had blunted. Women became the real challenge to men's sense of manliness. They called it into question, forced it constantly to prove itself, its bearing, its power, its control. Actually, upon women were projected the whole society's doubts about itself, about modernity, and about change.

Subject to their own mixed feelings, women also became subjected to mixed signals. Immersed in discontinuities, safeguarding many traditional ideal, yet fascinated by change, they shuttled back and forth between the old and the new. This ambivalent state of mind at the crossroads of continuity and change-shared by men and women alike-is epitomized in the literary life of Forough Farrokhzad. Not only is her work the *locus classicus* incompatible aspirations

but criticism it elicited is fascinating in its ambivalence. Whatever the forum, before her death or after, the main drift of criticism seems to revolve around the sensual-erotic nature of her work. Many translated and still translate her search for autonomy, growth, and love into predominantly sexual terms. They disregard her struggle to change her world and her role in it in favour of erotic themes in her poems.

It is true that love themes consistently form the core of Farrokhzad's poetry, but its treatment is not strictly sensuous. It entails a radical reordering of values, acknowledges the limitations and failure of conventional love to satisfy the poet, and appropriates new communicative and personal terrain denied women previously. Farrokhzad explores the self both within and beyond heterosexual love relationships. This neither demands nor brings about a denial of her passionate relationships with men. On the contrary, it expands her loving potential. Indeed, the needs of friendship, communication, and growth are as satisfied as those of the body in some of her poems. Before Farrokhzad, this intellectual reciprocity, this commitment to the expansion of relational possibilities, was rarely described in modern Persian literature. She believed modern Persian poetry rarely has known what it is to love truly. In it, love is so magnified, so plaintive, and so anguished that it does not match the nervous and hasty lines of today's life. Or else, it is so primitive and so full of the pain of celibacy that it automatically reminds one of male cats in season on sunny roofs. Love is not commemorated as the most beautiful and purest feeling of

humankind. The union and mingling of two bodies, with its beauty resembling praise and prayer, it debased to the level of a mere primitive necessity.

To limit critical analysis of Farrokhzad's poetry to an exclusive preoccupation with one aspect of love, mainly the erotic, is to trivialize or neglect its many other merits. One subtle consequence of this excessive eroticization has been a dismissal of her poetry by some as 'sentimental', 'sensuous', and hence 'unimportant'.

Searching for independence yet attached to traditional ideals of femininity, Farrokhzad worked with conflicts from within and sociocultural contradictions from without. She wrote in an atmosphere of encouragement and admiration mingled with bitter criticism and even contempt. Indeed, her poetry has seldom left its Iranian readers impartial, evoking either strong attraction or intense aversion. Denounced by some for its immortality and its advocacy of promiscuity, it has been celebrated by others for its distinctively female voice that challenges the dominant value systems of her culture. Overall, however, a large number of avid and enthusiastic readers have consistently offered their faithful support to this poetry. With numerous reprints, her work has been among the most popular in modern Persian literature. The enormous appeal of Farrokhzad's books has baffled critics for several decades now.

6.1.1. Summing Up

1. Forough Farrokhzad who had published five books of poems, *The Captive* (1955), *The Wall* (1956), *The Rebellion* (1958), *Another Birth* (1964), and *Let's Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season* (1965) was daring and brave enough in subject matter, to express the hidden feelings and emotions of the Iranian women who had been suffering a double repression, deprived of many civil and even of some fundamental human rights in a patriarchal society. Her earlier poems were weak in form and without much originality in imagery, but they clearly reflected the sorrows and the aspirations of contemporary Iranian young women, who felt drowned in (their) innocent youth and confined to the repressed life behind the curtains of traditions. She knew that young women like her, wished to free themselves from the prison of veiled chastity and forced modesty, and to shout out, among other things, their natural desires:

*I want you, and I know
That I can never take you in my arms;
You are like that clear, bright sky,
And I am a captive bird in this cage.*¹

(The Captive, Book 1: *The Captive*)

2. Searching for independence yet attached to traditional ideals of femininity, Farrokhzad worked with conflicts from within and sociocultural contradictions from without. This ambivalent state of mind at the crossroads of

continuity and change-shared by men and women alike-is epitomized in the literary life of Forough Farrokhzad.

O God, I do not know what I desire

What do I look for all the time

What I look like, O my weary eyes

Why is depressed this burning heart ²

(Fugitive, Book 1: *The Captive*)

3. Her first step of rebellion in real life was to separate from her husband, whom she had married at the age of sixteen. Being a divorced mother at the age of nineteen, it was very agonizing for her to pass through this stage of liberation. In a poem entitled, *The Demon of the Night*, reproaching her for the sin she has committed, the evil spirit of darkness, says to her:

I am a demon, but you are a worse demon than I!

A mother, and yet unchaste?

Oh! How dare you to let the poor pure child

lay his head on your stained lap! ³

(The Demon of the Night, Book 1: *The Captive*)

Then, in another poem entitled, *The Deserted Home*, she admits that, by leaving her husband and her only child, she has deprived their home of “the happiness of life” and says:

*I know that now a child is crying,
 full of sorrow of separation from his mother;
 But, wounded at heart and distressed, I am on the path of my desire.
 My friend and my beloved is poetry
 And I go to find it.*⁴

(The Deserted Home, Book 1: The Captive)

4. Love theme consistently forms the core of Farrokhzad's poetry, but its treatment is not strictly sensuous. Farrokhzad explores the self both within and beyond heterosexual love relationships. This neither demands nor brings about a denial of her passionate relationships with men. Actually, in her poems, feelings are not rationalized, passions are not diluted, emotions are not flattened, details are not evaded, and men are not absent. She, in her poems has created a sense of self-divorced from the conventional definition of womanhood.

*... Once more my scorched lips
 long for your passionate kiss
 my heart is pounding and each beat tells
 the tale of my love for you (that I miss)*

*If fate has separated me from you
 I will disengaged myself of this trap never fear
 because of this live I fear
 I will end up in my grave*

*You have made my silent emptiness
 overflow with recollection
 my verse is the flame of my passion
 you have made of me a poet in a fashion*⁵

(The Bitter Meeting, Book 1: The Captive)

5. Denounced by some for its immortality and its advocacy of promiscuity, it has been celebrated by others for its distinctively female voice that challenges the dominant value systems of her culture. Her claims to personal rights and independence created unprecedented problems in a society where the age-old male-centred value, especially in the sexual domain, had remained intact.

*My crazy and feverish poem,
 shy of the indentures of desire,
 is again burning its frame
 from the eternal thirst of fire.*

*Yes, it is the beginning of loving
 though the end of the path is unknown;
 but I don't think of the end,
 it is loving that charms, I must own.*⁶

(From Love, Book 1: The Captive)

6. Her poems are autobiographical and form a clearly feminine perspective. Confessional in her tone, Forough Farrokhzad strives to reconcile the emotional, sensual, and social aspects of a female self. In a society where historically, women, their beauty, breasts, hair, etc., have freely been made the subjects of poems, Forough Farrokhzad makes men her poetic subjects, her objects of love and reverie, of passion and sexual desire.

... My beloved

is wildly free

like a healthy instinct

in the heart of a deserted island

... My beloved

like the god of a Nepales shrine

has been innocent from the start

he is a man of bygone centuries

a reminder of beauty's truth

... My beloved

is a simple man

a simple man

I have hidden

in between my breasts

like the last relic of a wondrous religion

*in this ominous land of wonders.*⁷

(My Beloved, *Book 4: Another Birth*)

7. When her rebellion against traditional values, social old norms had gone far enough to give her the freedom of personality for which she had long fought, Forough Farrokhzad began her real journey in the realm of selfhood. It was then that she stopped writing poems which were the plain cries of an unhappy woman, despised by society, and sometimes very close to erotica:

In the stress of the temple of desire

I am lying beside your passionate body;

My kisses have left their marks on your shoulders

*Like fiery bites of a snake.*⁸

(The Song of Beauty, *Book 3: The Rebellion*)

8. Her friendship with a number of modernist poets and erudite intellectuals, encouraged her to find a quite different poetical vision. Now, she could say poetry is a serious matter for her. A responsibility, which she felt about her own individuality, some sort of answer that she should give to her life. From then on, instead of standing against society, she tried to understand it; instead of being the voice of her individual world, she became conscious of the great common spirit of humankind. Her poems, while simple and fluid in their language and imagery, found a new depth and a rather philosophical tone.

*They were drowned in their own fear
And the frightening sense of sin
Had paralysed
Their blind, dumb souls...*

*Perhaps
Behind their crushed eyes, at the depth of inanimateness,
Something confused, with a flicker of life,
Was still left;
And, with its faint effort,
It wanted to believe in the purity of waters' songs.*

*Perhaps; but what an infinite emptiness!
The sun was dead,
And no one knew
That the name of the sad dove,
Which had escaped from hearts, was faith.⁹*

(Eternal Verses, Book 4: Another Birth)

9. Life, death, happiness, sorrow, the beauty of nature, the ugliness of social injustice, hope in love's triumph, despair caused by the force of ignorance and hypocrisy, and other notions and emotions, filled her poems with the spirit of reality. She returned to the most powerful and the subtlest virtue of her poetic vision: the sacredness of womanhood and the mystical beauty of sex.

*... The clock flew away,
The curtain went away with the wind;
I had squeezed him
In the halo of fire;
I wanted to speak
But, ohh!
His dense shady eyelashes
Like the fringes of a silk curtain
Flowed from the depth of darkness
Along the stretched groin of desire,
Along the quiver, that deadly quiver,
Drown the lost end of mine.

I felt I was being freed,
I felt I was being freed.

I felt my skin burst in the expansion of love;
I felt my fiery mass melt slowly,
And then it trickled,
Trickled,
Trickled
Down into the moon, the sunken, agitated dark moon.¹⁰*

10. Farrokhzad celebrated death, welcomed it, yearned for it, and even embraced it by committing suicide, although she was saved. Death is considered an act through which a female poet can achieve a place and a voice of her own within the phallogentric domain of language. The act of writing is the identification with the paternal, but the act of writing poetry, the language of revolution, render the death wish inevitable. However, here the desire for death is the desire to unite with the maternal and the semiotic, paying the price of having a voice. As Farrokhzad says, "it is only the voice that will last".¹¹ This voice strongly links the poetry of Farrokhzad through themes to death and rebirth.

11. Feminism, as a term conjures pictures of women's liberation movement of the West. Nevertheless, it is a social movement, which has roots in all the continents of the world. Feminism mainly challenged the male point of view. Forough Farrokhzad was proud of being a woman. Her dream was to see the equality of rights between men and women in Iran but she never called herself a feminist. She just declared her thoughts as a feminine sensibility that due to her psychological and ethical make-up, she views things differently and the gender is not important really. Although, it cannot be denied that some of her poems can be interpreted feministically.

6.2. Main Findings in the Poems of Kamala Das

Modern Indian poetry in English is one of the many 'new literatures' which began to emerge at the end of the Second World War after the end of colonialism. Indian poetry in English is one of the many new areas of culture, which have resulted from national independence. Poetry in English by Indian women has been seen at odds with traditional culture. This is another issue overtaken by modern society in which what is supposedly traditional is often a guise for gaining or keeping power when faced with the liberating effects of democracy, education and urbanization. While the liberation of Indian poetry in English from a conscious, formalized British speech and diction occurs about the same time in the mid 1960s for both male and female poets, a direction of expression and natural, idiomatic, colloquial vigour is more often found in the verse of Kamala Das (1934-2009), Mamta Kaila (b.1940), Eunice de Souza (b.1940) and Melani Silgado(b.1956) than in the male Indian English poets. In their rebellion against the traditional role of Indian women the women poets, led by Das , had to fight against the kind of diction used by such poets as Varma (1907-1987) and Deshpande (1942-2003), in which refined, lady-like language was associated with a conformity of behaviour and attitude. Just as in rejection the spiritualism of Aurobindo (1872-1950) the male poets insisted on precision and economy, the women in expressing new attitude required a new, more appropriate way of writing about their emotions, experience and consciousness of themselves as women.

The poems by Indian women today constitute a distinct phenomenon. It is the fact that they are not lagging far behind their male counterparts in a point of creativity. They have hardly written any light-hearted verse. They have carved out a distinct image of woman and taken her out of her cozy power of old world tradition and expressed her feelings and thoughts without any inhibitions.

To build an epic saga out of the predicament and dread of the lost self has been the effort of the major poets of this century. The poetry of Kamala Das is an outgrowth of this modern emphasis on the 'I' as the crucial poetic symbol. A poet's raw material, as she says, is neither stone nor clay; it is poet's personality. She confesses that she could not escape from her predicament even for a moment. The uniqueness of her poetic utterance lies in the fact that as a woman, she braves the risk of exposing her naked self and given the conventionality of Indian women, it is her rare achievement.

Extreme honesty and truthfulness are the most impressive characteristics of Kamala Das' poetry. Women are forced to lie for survival. They lie not only to men but also to women to keep relationships. They lie even with their bodies. Women have been driven mad, gas lighted for centuries by the refutation of their experiences and their instincts in a culture, which validates only male experience. The truth of their bodies and their minds has been mystified to them. *My Story* of Kamala Das with its honesty, courage and willingness to reveal the most intimate aspects of her life, marks a turning point in the history of modern

Indian writing in English. Her poetry removes skin after skin from over her psyche and in the manner of confessional poets like Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath, John Berryman, W.D.Snodgrass, and in Iran, Forough Farrokhzad, it has been an effort to remove the mask that covers the poet's actual face. To own what we are, to accept what we feel and to come up with that without any mask, in full knowledge, with no intention of 'telling it slant' is the new direction of women's writing and in India, Kamala Das is the champion of honest writing.

6.2.1. Summing Up

1. The crux of Kamala Das' poetry is a search for an identity. In her poetic collections – *Summer in Calcutta* (1965), *The Descendants* (1967), *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems* (1973), and *Only the Soul Knows How to Sing* (2006), and in the process of self-search, she oscillates between her nostalgic past and nightmarish present. Past is a symbol of security, love and freedom and present stands for insecurity, pretensions and bondage of society. Her consciousness lies stretched between these two poles; it is drawn towards the positive past but held back by the negative present. One emotion, however, that is common to both states, is that of pain.

Deep, deep pain

To be frank,

*I have failed.*¹²

2. Kamala Das looks very determined to revolt against the conventional society's definition of womanhood and the traditional norms of society, which tried to clip her wings of freedom:

Dress in saris, be girl

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

Be a quarreller with servants. Fit in. Oh,

*Belong...*¹³

(An Introduction: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

3. Then she turned rebellious and wore shirts and trousers of her brother, cut her hair short and ignored the fetters of her womanliness. She asked for love:

...not knowing what else to ask

For, he drew a youth of sixteen into the

*Bedroom and closed the door.*¹⁴

(An Introduction: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

4. Soon, experience took the place of innocence, betrayal of virginity, and indifference of involvement. The transition was not gradual but abrupt and this was transition from androgyny to femininity. Femininity means a woman's conscious way of being the world. Kamala Das in her poems, writes directly on her inner world. Her poems are:

The speech of the mind that is

Here and not there, a mind that sees and hears and

Is aware. ¹⁵

(An Introduction: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

5. Longing for pure love and its failure, is the major theme of her poetry.

This yearning is crushed under a life of stupid pretence:

I was taught to break saccharine into your tea and

to offer at the right moment the vitamins. Cowering

beneath your monstrous ego I ate the magic loaf and

became a dwarf. ¹⁶

(The Old Playhouse: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

6. She finds herself reduced to a mere archetype, a ‘finished’ woman. Her marriage demanded a surrender of herself and a surrender of personal desires. She wondered, was every married adult a clown in bed, a circus performer? She concluded to hate marriage. This gave rise to an ambivalent situation – extreme love of body and extreme loathing of body.

7. Like the other contemporary women poets who use a franker and more pervasive anatomical imagery than their male counterparts, Kamala Das, with her insistent body language refuses the superior transcendence that comes at the

cost of denying flesh. Her earlier love poetry becomes unabashedly sexual and fails to enter the pure and sublime domains of love:

... You were pleased

With my body's response, its weather, its usual shallow

Convulsions. You dribbled spittle into my mouth, you poured

Yourself into every nook and cranny, you embalmed

My poor lust with your bittersweet juices. ¹⁷

(The Old Playhouse: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

8. Her parched self, in search of love, steps outside marriage. Her husband was nearly all the time away touring in the outer districts. Even while he was with her, they had no mental contact with each other. If at all she began to talk of her unhappiness, he changed the topic immediately and walked away. When she could no longer bear loneliness, she started to search for an ideal lover, however, had begun early in life:

... 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. In him... the hungry haste

Of rivers, in me... the oceans' tireless

Waiting. ¹⁸

(An Introduction: *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*)

9. Because of her disappointment in realizing an idealized form of love in her husband, she surrounded herself at the altar of Lord Krishna – the ideal and immortal lover. She celebrates her longing for the ‘idealized phallus’ manifested in the personality of Lord Krishna. Such a willing acceptance of the ideal transcendental lover Lord Krishna is no doubt the result of the impact of the oriental vision of transcendentalism and mysticism. She glorifies Radha’s eternal waiting for Lord Krishna and assumes a Radha-like personality and feels:

Everything in me

Is melting, even the hardness at the core.

O Krishna, I’m melting, melting, melting,

Nothing remains but

*You ...*¹⁹

(Radha: *The Descendants*)

10. After the death of her husband, Kamala Das who was born in a conservative Hindu Nair (Nallappattu) family and having royal ancestry fell in love with a Muslim. After being asked by him – Sadiq Ali, an Islamic scholar and a Muslim League MP whom according to her words was kind and generous in the beginning, she embraced Islam in 1999 at the age of 65 and assumed the name Kamala Surayya. Her conversion was rather controversial, among social and literary circles, with the Hindu calling it part of her ‘histrionics’. But as disturbing the society was a need in her character, she announced then,

converting to Islam was like a new birth for her. Although, later, she felt it was not worth it to change one's religion.

11. Her autobiography records her attempted suicide twice. According to Bruce King, there is a dualism in her poems, which he thinks is responsible for her attitude towards death. He believes, in her writing, soul is contrasted to body. She seems to imagine overcoming this dualism only through death; her poems are filled with longings to die, especially to drown in the sea. The dualism results from the fall of childhood innocence into the adult world of sexuality, marriage and life among strangers, especially an uncaring husband.

I throw the bodies out,

I cannot stand their smell.

Only the souls may enter

The vortex of sea.

Only the souls know how to sing

At the vortex of the sea.

...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.²⁰

6.3. Similarities and Differences

6.3.1. Similarities

1. Forough Farrokhzad and Kamala Das are autobiographical and confessional poets. In a subject matter and from a clearly feminine perspective, they are daring and brave enough to express the hidden feelings of themselves.

2. Having written on the variety of themes – life, death, happiness, sorrow, loneliness, doubt, searching for identity, the beauty of nature, the ugliness of social injustice, hope in love's triumph, despair, frustration, sex, lust, deprivation, unfulfilment, separation, childhood, the sacredness of womanhood and the mystical beauty of sex but mainly they are considered as the poets of love.

3. Forough Farrokhzad and Kamala Das are simple and fluid in language and imagery. The simplicity of diction, conversational patterns and tone, avoidance of artificiality of expression, as well as their choice of images from everyday life, all surely contribute to a closer connection between them and their readers.

4. Both of them did not have the support of their families about the style of their poetry and have always been advised to follow and respect the norms of the society.

5. Both of them are against the traditional and conventional norms of their societies. Their poetry has been labelled as poetry of protest or anguish.

6. Both of these two poets were unhappy in their married life and they agreed that if they had not married, they could have been better writers / poets.

7. Forough Farrokhzad and Kamala Das subverted their social and cultural codes. Eroticism, sensuality, description of the physical anatomy, praising the lover, presence of a man as a lover or beloved, frankness in describing their feminine emotions and sensations are prominent in the majority of their poems. The speaker in their poems confesses to adulterous affairs, sometimes with regret but never without some degree of delight.

8. Aware of the social problems, especially the unjust situation of the women of their countries but they detached themselves from any label like 'Feminist'. Their dreams were equality between the rights of men and women. They struggled for the freedom of writing without concealing or veiling the emotions.

9. The woman in their poems struggles between passion and tradition. She wants to break the chains around her and wants to be free and not to be silent.

10. Apart from marriage, which can be an important change in life, sometimes the presence of another person can be more effective and can change the complete route of life. After death of her husband and after being asked by her lover Sadiq Ali, an Islamic scholar and a Muslim League MP, Kamala Das embraced Islam in 1999 at the age of 65 and assumed the name Kamala Surayya. Forough Farrokhzad also, after getting divorce and like Kamala Das, experiencing some short-lived relationships, finally met the most effective

person in her life. Farrokhzad's friendship with Ebrahim Golestan – the controversial film-maker, producer and writer led to the last most productive phase of her life, to the expansive vision she brought to bear on her art and the uncanny aesthetic quality she instilled in her work.

11. Both Das and Farrokhzad celebrate death, welcome it, yearn for it, and even embrace it by committing suicide – although unsuccessful. They wanted to be unique and not a part of the conventional social set up. This conflict with the society leads them to introspection. In the course, comes a breaking point when they could not compromise with themselves. They lose themselves helplessly in the battle and start searching for the lost self. At this juncture, life becomes unbearable and the call of death becomes irresistible. They are more than convinced that death can offer them more solace than life.

12. After the death of Kamala Das, India lost a great writer and poet who in many ways is often misread, misunderstood and mistreated. Farrokhzad's death also shocked Iran as the sudden, senseless tragedy of a growing, still youthful artist cut down before maturity and fulfilment. They wrote with such passion that their poetries remain iconoclastic yet daring to read.

13. However, both of these two poets influenced on many writers / poets among them, Sobha De and RK Singh are influenced by Kamala Das and in Iran, Shadab Vajidi, Maimanat Sadeghi, Zhila Mosa'ed, Mina Asadi, and others are inspired by Forough Farrokhzad

6.3.2. Differences

1. While erotic and romantic themes are prominent in the early poems of Forough Farrokhzad, but in her last two collections – *Another Birth* and *Let's Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season*, her poetic vision takes on a more explicitly social, political, and even epic tone. But, Kamala Das is interested mostly in talking about her sexual exploitation, her physical life and moods of her body; for instance, we find fewer poems about social situation of India at that time rather than the unfair situation of Indian women in a traditional male-dominated society. *I Grieve for the Garden* by Forough Farrokhzad and *An Introduction* by Kamala Das, can be the examples of above mentioned issue.

2. Studying the poetry collections of Forough Farrokhzad from the beginning to the end shows the poet's gradual developing transition from a mere sad complainer of the patriarchal and male-dominated society to a sympathetic social critic who understands her identity and comprehends her society, criticizes it fairly. Instead of being the voice of her individual world, she becomes conscious of the great spirit of humankind. In addition, in many of her poems, Farrokhzad's poetic personae no longer seems to represent merely her autobiographical self in the expression of feelings and views, but rather all Iranians with similar feelings. But in Kamala Das' poetry collections, we cannot trace a developing line; it means, a path which shows a kind of evolution in her thoughts is not clear. Revolting against the social boundaries and being

conscious of the contemporary problems, she views them with detachment and her prominent themes have always been the shadowy borderline between fulfilment and unfulfilment in love and looking for an ideal love / lover. She has a moody mind and in her poems, we are swept along by frequently alternating moods of celebration and frustration basically about love. This vagueness and instability halt the reader's mind to remember some of her poems, which reveal the different aspects of her mind. For instance, in *An Introduction*, we get to know about her life philosophy, which is based on Vedantic concept of 'Thou art me' or in *Radha*, she shows her religious interest to Lord Krishna .

3. Another difference that is more apparent in the poetry of Kamala Das rather than Forough Farrokhzad, is her paradoxical points of view about some issues. One of her reasons to embrace Islam was that she liked being behind the protective veil of purdah. This sense of feeling safe by being hidden behind a veil is a paradox against her confessional, self-revealed, and frank nature, which is so obvious in her literary works such as her poems and her autobiography – *My Story*. If she felt safe, by hiding her face and body then how she could clearly talk about her private moments with her lovers or describe some sexual images without feeling unsafe? Or according to her words, converting to Islam was like a new birth for her, then how later she felt it was not worthy to change her religion? On the other hand, how a person who warns women not to be happy in lying buried beneath a man can invite them to stand nude before the glass with their lovers and gift them all which makes them women? If all these

notions and actions are not the products of a paradoxical mind, then how else a reader can interpret them? Forough Farrokhzad with all her explicitness is not as frank as Kamala Das but at least her poems are not paradoxical. If she encourages the women to rise and seek their rights from those who keep them weak and seated in a corner of the house, she also did this effort for her life, which is mentioned in the following lines.

4. Another difference between these two poets, which in any way affected their poetry, is their confrontation with their married life. Both of them got married very soon – Forough Farrokhzad with love and Kamala Das without love and after a while both of them became unhappy because of their husbands; but what were their reactions about this matter? Forough could not accept the conventional limitations, which could have made her to quit poetry, and got divorced after three years. Because of her vast eagerness to poetry, she even had to leave her only child. Her father did not accept her at his home and she had to live alone without money until she could find a job but she never looked at her art as a profession to make money. Although, she experienced some relationships but never assumed them as the materials of her writings. Kamala Das experienced a loveless and companionless marriage. Her husband left her free to choose her own company and occupy herself as best as she could; but, strangely enough, she adds that it was a good relationship. On the other hand, in a paradoxical statement, she confesses that although she wrote about ‘men’s lust’ on her husband’s insistence that she makes it hot, she hated him for

suggesting that she ought to write more voyeuristic delight than with serious poetic intent. Nevertheless, Kamala does not deny her relationships and emphasizes, that she entered into relationships to find writing material. She looked at poetry as a profession which because it does not sell well so she had to have other jobs to survive.

6.4. Epilogue

In the struggle for freedom from all forms of oppression – familial, social, political, institutional – in which, by force or customs, etiquette, education or even division of labour, the female is subsumed by the male, the woman writer embarks on a personal odyssey. This journey to the dark continent visualized as the mother country of liberated desires and female authenticity, is undertaken in order to release and realize the full potential of her complex identity as a woman and as a writer. A prototypical journey that derives its consciousness from the group experience of women, it begins in physical and psychological bondage and envisions a new world of mutual respect and justice as its end. Through a voluntary entry into the consciousness of the female, women hope to write in their way out of the cramped confines of patriarchal space. Much of the vitality of women's writing derives from an attempt to subvert the conventional and stereotypical image of womanhood as passive, self-sacrificing and contended that ignores the wide-ranging efforts and achievements of scores of outstanding women. In attempting to capture authentically, the nitty-gritty of women's lives,

women writers reassert the authority of subjective experience. Their writing is no longer an engagement with maudlin autobiography but a brave and courageous act, which is poetic and political, passionate and objective even while drawing on passionate and objective even while drawing on subjective experience. This would not only help women to understand themselves and other women, but also help men to understand them better since both men and women are mutually engaged in an important business of living balanced and meaningful lives.

The individual experiences of these two poets – Kamala Das and Forough Farrokhzad, have their validity in the universal context of collective womanhood. Their writings lend voices to the scores of women whose voices have been silenced or remained unheard. Their poetry, in the broader context of women's experience in diverse cultures, illustrates how the work of significant artists helps to explain their era and our own. If the Iranian woman poet's psyche is dominated by anger and rage, the Indian woman poet's psyche is dominated by a sense of disappointment and longing for the ideal. Their attempt is to explore the common experience of woman that transcends national boundaries, for only women can describe and say what women are and how they are to be valued.

These women seek empowerment, which for them may flow from within or without. Perceived as an inherent strength, it may manifest itself in several

ways, in so much as it enables them to make choices and live their lives on their own terms, even while playing a significant role in social reconstruction. Their attempts to express themselves as women in their culture specifies and the larger global culture in particular, need to be appreciated and highlighted. These poets see their art as an act of resistance and a source of inherent power and energy. They then show us through their art the ways in which small acts of resistance that people perform can help change lives and perceptions.

The intention of this study was to examine the works of two poets against the backdrop of their historical time and space, in order to understand how their experiences as women and poets, have been the focus of their poetic concerns and poetic vision. These poets have experienced fear and pain along with their growth as writers and women and possess the ability to speak for and interpret the truths of their sex. This study has been undertaken in the conviction that Kamala Das has a special place in the history of twentieth century women's poetry in India, just as Forough Farrokhzad is significantly a contributor to the tradition of women's poetry in Iran. Their roles have grown not only because of the expanding expectations of their communities, but also because of the expectations of the growing congregation of women writers in general. Their works reflect diversity and provides a sample of some fine writings by women in the two countries. Their narrative traces the desire for freedom from gender oppression, from its abstract underpinnings to its concrete manifestation, even while it examines the construction of female identity through by the framework

of a common concern and engagement with communal obligation. In its commitment towards building and renewing a sense of collective life, their works record a movement from spectatorial detachment, to the predicament of unscrolling a map on which gender intersects in a shared landscape. Their shared project is to bring into being, the symbolic weight of women's consciousness to make the invisible visible, to make the silent speak. Brought up with all the visible trappings of emancipated women with a covert traditional agenda, these women were encouraged to work and be independent but also to get married and have children. Straddling two worlds, they represent tradition / modernity, freedom / bondage, progression / regression; these women have braved the perils of the tight-rope-walker and emerged triumphant. The women poets included in this study have a special kind of complexity. They are concerned with the overlapping worlds of tradition and skepticism, of collective responsibility and individual choice and with striking a tenuous balance. While working within the tradition of social comment, they have added different dimensions by bringing new material into their poetry with their strong portraits of women. The attempt is to move away from the notion of women as figures of exploitation and victimization and to look instead, for a more complimentary and challenging representation of women through different local experiences and traditions. With a remarkable sense of honesty and conviction, these two poets have helped establish an entirely new poetic, a new way of women to recreate themselves in

art as figures of power, in their passionate concern for women and for a more humane society. In writing then, these women are writing a New World.

In comparative literature, we can realize the common opinions of the human beings as they bring up in a country and that very idea reveals in another place but in various forms. The comparative study of these two contemporary poets is a prelude to grasp the new, creative and innovative ideas in the fields of Persian and Indian English literature.

Although this research can be a new study about these two poets in a comparative mode but the researcher suggests further reading and surveying about different aspects of their poems. Some poems can be studied from Symbolic or Metaphorical point of view; the use of some images can help the reader to understand better the poets' thoughts and feelings. Social study will show the dominant atmosphere of their era and it helps to find the reasons of their protest and anguish. As these poets considered to be confessional and autobiographical poets, a Psychological survey will light up the different parts of their characters. Although, Forough Farrokhzad and Kamala Das detached themselves from any 'ism' but a Feminist interpretation on some of their poems is inevitable. Feminine Sensibility in their poems is so much transparent that no one can deny it. Even a controversial arena like Religious study can be applicable on their poems. This present study can be a beginning for those students who are eager to know more about the contemporary literature of Iran

and India, especially about women writers / poets and it can be a help for those instructors who teach poetry.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 1: The Captive*, Trans. Mehdi Afshar, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 21).
2. Ibid. (P: 12).
3. Ibid. (P: 37).
4. Ibid. (P: 79).
5. Ibid. (P: 47).
6. Ibid. (P: 98).
7. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 4: Another Birth*, Trans. Manavaz Alexanderian, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 54).
8. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 3: Rebellion*, Trans. Mehdi Afshar, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 32).
9. Forough Farrokhzad, *Book 4: Another Birth*, Trans. Manavaz Alexanderian, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 65).
10. Ibid. (P: 40).
11. Farrokhzad, Forough. *Book 5: Let's Believe in the beginning of the Cold Season*, Trans. Manavaz Alexanderian, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, (P: 40).
12. Kamala Das, *The Descendants*, Calcutta, Writers Workshop, 1991, (P: 35).

13. Kamala Das, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*, Mumbai, Orient Longman, 2004, (P: 26).
14. Ibid. (P: 26).
15. Ibid. (P: 26).
16. Ibid. (P: 1).
17. Kamala Das, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*, Mumbai, Orient Longman, 2004, (P: 1).
18. Kamala Das, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*, Mumbai, Orient Longman, 2004, (P: 26).
19. Kamala Das, *The Descendants*, Calcutta, Writers Workshop, 1991, (P: 15).
20. Kamala Das, *The Descendants*, Calcutta, Writers Workshop, 1991, (P: 7).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Works of Forough Farrokhzad

- Farrokhzad, Forough. *Book 1: The Captive*, Trans. Mehdi Afshar, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, Print.
- Farrokhzad, Forough. *Book 2: The Wall*, Trans. Mehdi Afshar, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, Print.
- Farrokhzad, Forough. *Book 3: Rebellion*, Trans. Mehdi Afshar, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, Print.
- Farrokhzad, Forough. *Book 4: Another Birth*, Trans. Manavaz Alexanderian, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, Print.
- Farrokhzad, Forough. *Book 5: Let's Believe in the beginning of the Cold Season*, Trans. Manavaz Alexanderian, Tehran, Samir Publication, 2006, Print.

Works of Kamala Das

- Das, Kamala. *Only the Soul Knows How to Sing*, Kerala, D C Books, 2006, Print.
- Das, Kamala. *Summer in Calcutta*, Kerala, D C Books, 2004, Print.
- Das, Kamala. *The Descendants*, Calcutta, Writers Workshop, 1991, Print.

- Das, Kamala. *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*, Mumbai, Orient Longman, 2004, Print.

Secondary Sources

- Abedi, Kamyar. *Lonelier than a leaf: Life and Poems of Forough Farrokhzad*, Tehran, Diba Publisher, 1998, Print.
- Atashi, Manouchehr. *Forogh Among the Ghosts*, Tehran, Amitis Publishers, 2003, Print.
- Bassnett, Susan. *Comparative Literature – A Critical Introduction*, Oxford UK & Cambridge USA, Blackwell Publisher, 1993, Print.
- Chavan, Sunanda P. *The Fair Voice: A Study of Indian Women Poets in English*, New Delhi, Sterling, 1984, Print.
- Cheshmi, Atena. *Mystery of a Life – New Look on the Poems of Forough Farrokhzad*, Ostad Publishers, 2008, Print.
- Craig Hillman, Michael. *A Lonely Woman: Forough Farrokhzad and Her Poetry*, Washington, Mage Publishers, 1987, Print.
- Das, Bijay Kumar. *Modern Indo-English Poetry*, Bareilly, Prakash Book Depot, 1982, Print.
- Das, Bijay Kumar. *Postmodern Indian English Literature*, New Delhi, Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2006, Print.
- Das, Kamala. *My Story*, New Delhi, Harper Collins Publishers, 2009, Print.

-
- Das, Kamala, Suresh Kohli, *Closure – Some Poems and a Conversation*, New Delhi, Harper Collins Publishers, 2009, Print.
 - Dastgheib, Abdol Ali. *The Little Mermaid: Analysis of Forough Farrokhzad's Poems*, Tehran, Amitis Publishers, 2006, Print.
 - De Souza, Eunice. *Nine Indian Women Poets – An Anthology*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2010, Print.
 - Esmaili, Amir. Sedarat, Abolghasem. *Eternal Forough Farrokhzad*, Tehran, Marjan, 1968, Print.
 - Farrokhzad, Pouran. *Uncompleted Halves*, Tehran, Tandis, 2001, Print.
 - Farrokhzad, Pouran. *The One Who's Like No One – About the Poet, Forough Farrokhzad*, Tehran, Caravan Publishing House, 2001, Print.
 - Fooladvand, Ezatollah. *Contemporary Poets: Akhavan, Shamloo, Sepehri, Shafi'I, ...*, Tehran, Sokhan Publisher, 2008, Print.
 - Hoghoughi, Mohammad. *Our Time Poetry: Forough Farrokhzad*, Tehran, Negah Publishers, 2005, Print.
 - Iyengar, K.R.S. *Indian Writing in English*, New Delhi, Sterling, 1999, Print.
 - Jahed, Parviz. *Writing with Camera – Face to Face with Ebrahim Golestan*, Tehran, Akhtaran Publishers, 2005, Print.
 - Kaur, Iqbal. *Perspectives on Kamala Das' Poetry*, New Delhi, Intellectual Publishing House, 1995, Print.

-
- Kianush, Mahmud. *Modern Persian Poetry*, Maryland, Ibex Publishers, 1996, Print.
 - King, Bruce. *Modern Indian Poetry in English*, USA, Oxford University Press, 2005, Print.
 - Krishna Mehrotra, Arvind. *An Illustrated History of Indian Literature in English*, USA, Oxford University Press, 2000, Print.
 - Langaroodi, Shams. *An analytic history of Persian Modern Poetry*, Vol.3 (1962-1971), Tehran, Nashr-e-Markaz Publishing Co., 1998, Print.
 - Madani, Nasrin . *In dusty lanes of Innocence – A Comparative Study of the Poems of Forough Farrokhzad and Ghada al-Saman, the Contemporary Syrian Poet*, Tehran, Cheshmeh Publishers, 2006, Print.
 - Milani, Farzaneh. *Veils and Words – The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1992, Print.
 - Milani, Farzaneh. *Words Not Swords – Iranian Women Writers and the Freedom of Movement*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 2011, Print.
 - Mohammadi, Hassan Ali. *Iran Contemporary Poetry: from Bahar to Shahriyar*, Vol.2, Tehran, Arghanoon Publisher, 1993, Print.
 - Moradi Kouchi, Shahnaz. *Forough Farrokhzad: A Miscellany*, Tehran, Ghatreh Publishers, 2005, Print.
 - Nabar, Vrinda. *The Endless Female Hungers*, New Delhi, Sterling, 1994, Print.

-
- Peeradina, Saleem. *Contemporary Indian Poetry in English – An Assessment and Selection*, Mumbai, Macmillan India, 1972, Print.
 - Philips, Robert. *The Confessional Poets*, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1973, Print.
 - Plath, Sylvia. *The Collected Poems*, Ed. Ted Hughes, New York, Buccaneer Books Inc., 1981, Print.
 - Rahman, Anisur. *Expressive Form in the Poetry of Kamala Das*, New Delhi, Abhinav Publications, 1981, Print.
 - Ramarnurti, K. *Twenty Five Indian Poets in English*, New Delhi, Macmillan India Limited, 1995, Print.
 - Sanasarian, Eliz. *The Women's Rights Movements in Iran*, New York, Praeger, 1982, Print.
 - Sarang, Vilas. *Indian English Poetry since 1950: an anthology*, Hyderabad, Disha Books, 2007, Print.
 - Singh, Mina Surjit. *Six Women Poets – A Cross-Cultural Study*, New Delhi, Prestige Books, 2003, Print.
 - Tilak, Raghuku. *New Indian English Poets and Poetry*, New Delhi, Rama Brothers India PVT.LTD., 2005, Print.
 - Weisstein, Ulrich. *Comparative Literature and Literary Theory: Survey and Introduction*, Trans by. William Riggan (in collaboration with the author), Bloomington and London, Indiana University Press, 1973, Print.

Web Sources

I. Refiq, Sami. “A Comparative Study of Selected Poems of Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das”, August 12, 2007, Web. 01.11.2010.

<www.shvoong.com/humanities/1647218-comparative-study-selected-poems-sylvia/>

II. Jamali, Leyli. “Too Close, Too Far, Death and Rebirth in Sylvia Plath’s Ariel and Forough Farrokhzad’s Another Birth”, 2008, Web. 01.11.2010.

<www.ebookpedia.net/Too-Close--Too-Far--Death-and-Rebirth-in-Sylvia-Plath-s-Ariel-and----.html>

III. Translated by Iran Chamber Society, “Call to Arms”, Persian Language and Literature, Forough Farrokhzad – The Most Famous Woman in the History of Persian Literature, Web. 10.12.2012

<http://www.iranchamber.com/literature/ffarrokhzad/forough_farrokhzad.php#arms>

IV. Translated by Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, “The Sin”, Forough Farrokhzad’s Open Forum Website, 8, Web. 15.03.2013.

<<http://www.foroughfarrokhzad.org/selectedworks/selectedworks8.asp>>

V. Shobha Warriar, “Manipulation Is Not a Bad Word All the Time – The Rediff Interview with Kamala Das, 1996, Web. 01.03.2013.

<<http://www.rediff.com/news/1996/3107adas.htm>>

VI. Seyyede Tavos Rahmani, "Thought of Forough Farrokhzad from the *Rebellion to Another Birth*, Science Road Publishing Corporation, Trends in Advanced Science and Engineering, ISSN: 2251-6557, TASE 6(1) 88-93, 2012, Journal homepage: <http://www.sciroad.com/ntase.html>, Web. 10.03.2013

<<http://www.sciroad.com/TASE/TASE1261/TASE-12118.pdf>>

VII. www.google.com

VIII. www.wikipedia.com

