

## ARTICLE

# Language as Revolt: A Discursive Inquiry into Gendered Deliberation in the Confessional Writings of Plath and Das

Seema Ghangale<sup>1</sup> , Madan Jagtap<sup>1\*</sup> , Atul Bansilal Patil<sup>2</sup> , Kishor Dalve<sup>3</sup> , Sushil Paliwal<sup>4</sup> ,  
Harshal Tare<sup>5</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Symbiosis Institute of Operations Management, Nashik, Affiliated to Symbiosis International (Deemed) University, Pune 422008, India

<sup>2</sup> MIT School of Humanities, MIT Art, Design and Technology University, Pune 412201, India

<sup>3</sup> Institute of Management and Research (IOM&R), MGM University, Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar 431003, India

<sup>4</sup> Delight Management Studies and Research Institute, Bhorewadi, Manchar, Affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune 410503, India

<sup>5</sup> OPC Private Limited, Jalgaon 425001, India

## ABSTRACT

The confessional poetry of Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das is compared discursively in this research, with an emphasis on how their language use subverts patriarchal narratives and reclaims agency. Both poets write in intimate, self-revealing ways that defy gendered, psychological, and social norms. While Das bravely defies patriarchal standards through her voyaging of desire, passion, and female liberation, Plath's confessional style dives into her battles with mental illness, relationships, and societal expectations of women. This study examines how the poets employ confessional dialogue to regain control over their identities and narratives as women through a comparative analysis of their works. From a linguistic perspective, both poets use unique stylistic markers that express psychological disintegration and socio-political opposition, such as abrupt enjambments, metaphorical density, and shifting pronouns. From a practical standpoint and a pragmatic perspective, their poems function as performative speech acts that involve, confrontation, and confession, where language

### \*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Madan Jagtap, Symbiosis Institute of Operations Management, Nashik, Affiliated to Symbiosis International (Deemed) University, Pune 422008, India; Email: [madan.jagtap@siom.in](mailto:madan.jagtap@siom.in)

### ARTICLE INFO

Received: 2 July 2025 | Revised: 24 July 2025 | Accepted: 6 August 2025 | Published Online: 23 September 2025  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i10.10856>

### CITATION

Ghangale, S., Jagtap, M., Dalve, K., et al., 2025. Language as Revolt: A Discursive Inquiry into Gendered Deliberation in the Confessional Writings of Plath and Das. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*. 7(10): 85–98. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i10.10856>

### COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2025 by the author(s). Published by Bilingual Publishing Group. This is an open access article under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).

serves as a weapon also a shield. Through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and profound textual analysis of both poets' select poems, the paper thoroughly examines the confessional narrative structure and the employment of language as a counter-narrative against oppression. This study reveals the linguistic techniques that influence the confessional voice of a few chosen poems by analyzing their structure, tone, and rhetorical choices. The study concludes by arguing that Das and Plath's confession is not only expressive but also an act of linguistic revolt that is both stylistically stimulating and pragmatically powerful, establishing them as radical voices in gendered poetic discourse.

**Keywords:** Confessional Writing; Gender Discourse; Poetic Discourse; Feminine Suppressions; Sexual Exploitation; Self-Explorations

## 1. Introduction

Confessional writers, though, write about self; the writing carries a new 'truth-effect', as Foucault called it. According to Michel Foucault's 1978 essay, 'The History of Sexuality,' confessions are "one of the main rituals we rely on for the production of truth" in the West<sup>[1]</sup>. Writings that addressed the subtleties of life and mood, enhancing and expanding 'the experience of oneself,' starkly contrasted this type of confession<sup>[2]</sup>. Writing the self seems to have elements in common, like depicting life experiences, sharing personal and psychological expressions, discussing complex human relationships, narrating biographical details, and revising conscious consciences. Sometimes this comes under the so-called writing boldly. Confessional writing takes all the above forms but goes beyond that, narrating the self.

Confession is a first-hand experience of self. Confession is an emotion. Confession is an expression of those emotions: upfront, outright, and straightforward. The confessional mode of writing is full of self-revelation, self-exploration, and self-exposure, written sincerely, spontaneously, as well as uninhibitedly and essentially fused with a universal atmosphere. Confession was observed as both an institutional obligation and a spiritual need in a religious backdrop so studying this as a tool becomes imperative<sup>[3]</sup>. Confessional writing has every reader as a constant observer who can know the personal experiences as the motivation behind the writing. An in-depth analysis of texts reveals various interpretations of confessional writing, and the historical and geo-political discussions around the writer also help in shaping the meaning of the text.

This research explores the methods for reading confessional literature, specifically poems in relation to genres of life writing such as confession and personal writing. Two

contemporary works of two different poets have been juxtaposed for comparison. This study focuses on the select work of two poets, Sylvia Plath (born in Boston, U.S.A.) and Kamala Das Surayya (born in Kerala, India). They are both known as confessional writers as their writing has confessional characteristics. The comparison reveals that despite different ethnic identities, the select writers have shockingly similar traumatic experiences to ink, and the confessional tool makes it universal. This study, with detailed textual analysis, tries to find out the confessional style of the writers, the geopolitical happenings behind writing, as well as the feminine urgency in the narrative with gender discourse.

Confessional writing is synonymous with the American poet Sylvia Plath, and some great literary works of the genre have been created by the legend Kamala Das, later known as Kamala Surayya. The work of these two poets has been the soul of this paper. The study has the following poems in consideration:

Sylvia Plath: i) *Daddy*; ii) *Lady Lazarus*; iii) *Tulips*.

Kamala Das: i) *The Old Playhouse*; ii) *Glass* iii) *The Suicide*; iv) *An Introduction*.

For both Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das, their poetry serves as a platform for the fusion of the personal and exterior. While Kamala Das is a confessional poet, she is also capable of going beyond the strictly personal and embracing the non-personal before merging the two. Plath herself makes insightful observations about the blending of the universal and the intimate.

"I think my poems immediately come out of the sensuous and emotional experiences I have, but I must say I cannot sympathise with these cries from the heart that are informed by nothing except a needle or a knife.... I believe

that one should be able to control and manipulate experiences, even the most terrifying, like madness, being tortured, with an informal and intelligent mind. I think that personal experience is very important, but certainly it should be relevant and relevant to the large things, the bigger things such as Hiroshima and Dechu and so on<sup>[4]</sup>”.

## 2. Literature Review

The lesser number in **Table 1** evidently shows that though Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das are widely acknowledged for their confessional genres, no substantial research has been conducted to understand their personal experiences (as a fuel for writing) in the confessional urge. Also, the range of their selected work in the previous range is limited. The existing pieces of research thus ascertain that Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das are known for their writing as feminine voices and strong representations of women’s problems. Poetry by Sylvia Plath has frequently been read as a critique of patriarchal civilization or as charges against the biographical characters in the poet’s life<sup>[5]</sup>. Also, in recent years, not much work has been done in this area, which creates a void for comparative analysis and a multidisciplinary approach to gender studies. However, the range of poems and combinations selected for this study has not been worked upon

yet. Moreover, their work was studied with the feelings of the female viewpoint, not the individual’s. Though the confessional element in the literary genre has been studied in academic research, the novelty in addressing this aspect lies in studying the works with an understanding of the personal experiences of the female writers and their victimhood in a male-centric setup. In addition, the confessional style cannot be analysed without the historical and geopolitical episodes and discussions that happen in a writer’s life. This research studies all such details in textual interpretations. The root of their personal pain has been studied through the detailed analysis of the poems. This research takes these confessions beyond the feminine suppressions and tries to find out the honest, creative reflection of the self. This study also confirms the universality of the experiences not as a woman but as a human. Due to this research gap in the literature, it is necessary to investigate how the two different writers of two different ethnicities, linguistic backgrounds, and cultural and social backgrounds assert their presence in shockingly the same narratives. Thus, this study is a reflective interplay of confession as a literary tool, the interpretation of select texts, the gender discourse to understand the universality of gender disparity issues, as well as analysing women writers’ experiences with a human point of view. Through their nuanced navigation of gender roles and expectations, Plath and Das illuminate the social norms that impede women’s autonomy and self-expression.

**Table 1.** A Literature Review on Confessional Composition Based on Work by Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das.

Authors	Objectives	Key Findings
Mehta <sup>[6]</sup>	To understand the struggle of women in a loveless relationship	The study reveals the poets’ experiences living under the shadow of male domination as it dissects the themes of love, identity, and death in their works.
Joshi et al. <sup>[7]</sup>	To concentrate on the predominant abuse of females in both Western and Eastern social orders.	The study reveals Sylvia Plath’s sense of suffocation in a male-dominated society.
Mishra <sup>[8]</sup>	To bring into being the process of self-exploration, a self-crisis which leads her (Kamala Das) towards self-realization	The paper explores the redefined problems and feelings of women that have remained unnoticed in the Indian literary world.
Ahima <sup>[9]</sup>	To compare the confessional narrative of Kamala Das and Sylvia Plath	The writing of Kamala Das and Sylvia Plath introduced new roads in writing for females to express what befalls them.
Sonali <sup>[10]</sup>	To bring out Kamala Das’s distinctive style of composing poetry in an unrestricted and courageous way.	Indian readers can see Das’s poetry as concerns connected with female reasonableness and Eve’s sexual lives.
Gupta and Sharma <sup>[11]</sup>	To examine confessional poetry with a psychoanalytical approach with reference to Sylvia Plath’s poems.	Psychoanalysis helps to study the Electra complex of Plath in her poem Daddy.
Khati <sup>[12]</sup>	To investigate the idea of gender disparity and women’s social status.	The Study highlights that the readers understand the psyche of the character and in the process of revealing the inner conflicts and thoughts, and the character experiences a healing therapy.

Table 1. *Cont.*

Authors	Objectives	Key Findings
Fatima et al. <sup>[13]</sup>	To examine Plath's poetry with reference to confessional poetry.	Through her poetry, Sylvia Plath asserts that there is still a long way to go before gender equality is achieved in the new millennium.
Jahan <sup>[14]</sup>	To examine how Kamala Das has used poetry as a vehicle to express her problems, mental dilemmas, and trauma. To explain her longing for love and affection and how she was deprived of them.	The poet vehemently protests against male domination and the consequent dwarfing of women. The work examines the poet's longing for love and affection, and how these were denied to her.

### 3. Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse confessional expressions and the urge in the select poems of Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das.
2. To compare the stylistic elements in the confessional writings of Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das for an in-depth understanding of how poetic form, tone, and linguistic choices shape their confessional voices.
3. To interpret the selected works for finding the universality in experiences and expressions.
4. To examine the linguistic and pragmatic features of the confessional mode in the select poems, focusing on how language, structure, and rhetorical choices reflect psychological depth and resistance to patriarchal discourse.
5. To identify the similarities in personal experiences of both works to understand the universal context of gender disparity and patriarchal mindset.

The strategy to achieve these objectives is to prepare an in-depth understanding of select poems of Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das, then to identify and analyse excerpts from the poems that show their experiences and expressions snowball in the writing.

### 4. Methodology and Analytical Approach

An interdisciplinary method for examining language as a social practice is called critical discourse analysis, or CDA <sup>[15]</sup>. It looks at how discourse is used to enact, reproduce, or fight dominance, power, and inequality. The link between language and ideology is the main emphasis of CDA, especially in socio-political and cultural situations <sup>[16]</sup>. It makes clear how language choices both reflect and influence power dynamics, particularly when marginalized voices <sup>[17]</sup> are used in texts. In this study, CDA reveals how Das and

Plath claim agency and subvert patriarchal norms. Through this systematic approach to analysing the text, this research identifies forms, incongruities, and triggering messages that contribute to the overall gist of the select work in specific and gender discourse in a broad spectrum. This method involves carefully reading and interpreting the text, identifying key phrases revealing the writer's internal turmoil, and considering the historical and cultural context in which the work was written. This approach makes it possible to thoroughly analyse the narrative devices, writing style, and thematic issues that influence the text's overall organisation.

#### 4.1. Data Collection

The following steps were undertaken in order to obtain the necessary data to support the study.

- a. Comprehensive reading of select poems
- b. Critical analysis of the select poems
- c. Select excerpts from the unit of analysis (a textual interpretation that shows the confessional urgency in the writing)

#### 4.2. Data Presentation

The data is presented by displaying excerpts from the poems, indicating the echo of personal pain inked in text. Each selected excerpt was analysed contextually and stylistically.

#### 4.3. Data Analysis

- a. To analyse the excerpts that show the similarity of the emotions in both writings
- b. To explore the relationship of personal experiences and emotional trauma in each poet's writings
- c. To highlight the result (s) of discussions
- d. To draw tentative conclusions based on the findings

produced through the analysis of the data using a qualitative descriptive method

## 5. Confession as a Tool: Theoretical Underpinning

In general, speaking out one's heart is called a confession. This is neither satirical nor funny. The compositions have nothing to do with religion or race. Though prevailing earlier, confessional poetry became known as a genre in the 20th century. In his review, M. L. Rosenthal first used the very term 'confessional' to describe the work of Robert Lowell<sup>[18]</sup>.

Confessional poetry form is an expression that helps create relatable pieces of literature. This expression builds an emotional bridge between the poet and many of the readers. The audience finds the work relatable and feels that their experiences are being spoken of by the writer. This helps them connect with the writer on an emotional level. Confession also helps to shed light on the issues that are less spoken of due to reasons like traditions, unreasonable laws, cultural taboos and social norms. The use of first-person voice in the composition calls for the reader's immediate attention. Reading such pieces aloud makes one vocal of the emotion that they too may be going through, giving the article life.

Confessional poetries have also fuelled studying human emotions in various settings and geographies. They have created a sense of connection amongst the people of similar thinking frequencies. The poems of the order have created an emotional and moral architecture that has schooled human sensations, responses, and cravings. In their poems, confessional poets explore very intimate issues. These poets are quite open in their discussion of these experiences. Their poetry serves as the psychological analogues of the events they've had in real life, which have a certain psychological effect.

These poets talk about personal experiences quite frankly. Their poems are psychological equivalents for their real-life experiences, which give rise to a particular mental state. There is a frank admission and bold treatment of private life. In this way, a confessional poem is a poet's honest confession, giving an authentic voice to the words.

It is said that the companion of confessional poetry is Romantic Poetry<sup>[19]</sup>. However, a confessional poem is distin-

guishable from its romantic counterpart. Though the speaker persona in both varieties expresses his/her relationship to the world of people or nature through the medium of the self, the kind of relationship expressed is not quite the same in both cases. In the romantic universe, the kinship with people and nature is basically healthy, however, strained, whereas, in the confessional universe, it is always sick and riddled with guilt, which makes the expression 'Confessional.' The sick relationship and antipathy to nature, which boomerangs on the self often leaving it insane. In this regard Robert Phillips says. "It cannot be accidental that all or nearly all the great confessional poets of the 1950s and 1960s have at one time or the other suffered mental breakdowns"<sup>[19]</sup>. He says, "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness". "We poets in our youth begin in sadness/thereof in the end come despondency and madness"<sup>[19]</sup>. The confessional poets were also known as the Madhouse Musse for this reason. Some critics have charged that 'Confessional poets are crazy'<sup>[19]</sup>.

## 6. Inside the Life, Work and Thought of Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das Surayya

The prerequisite of the inclusion of this section in this study holds a prime importance as to read into the confessional text and to set an inquiry with the writer's experiences, one has to understand their lives and demographics.

Since her death by suicide on 11 February 1963, Sylvia Plath has gained a great concern. She was born on 27 October 1932, in Boston, Massachusetts, to a mixed American – European Parentage. Otto Emil Plath, her father, was Polish. Aurelia Schober, her mother, was a first-generation American of Austrian descent. Her first publication appeared in 'The Boston Traveller' when she was as young as eight and a half, showing her interest in poetry from childhood. The above lines from her poems in childhood reveal the fact<sup>[20]</sup>. Growing up in a typical American setting, Plath faced problems due to her intelligence. As her society urged, she needed to be sexually appealing, yet the concept of sex was unsettling to her for both moral and personal reasons. The constant conflict between her mind and her body is reflected in her poems. In 1955, Sylvia Plath won the full bright scholarship to Cambridge. Ted Hughes met Sylvia Plath in March 1956,

and it was the following 16 June, Bloomsday, that she married Ted Hughes. On 1 April 1960, birth of her first child, Frieda Rebecca Hughes, excited her. In 1961, she started working on her novel, 'The Bell Jar'. In January 1962, her second child, Nicholas Farrar Hughes was born. But the summer of that year came with new trouble. Their marital relationship started to break down<sup>[20]</sup>. The past haunted her, and she was not afflicted with her conflict between external brilliance and achievements and her bitter sense of loneliness. She committed suicide on 11 February 1963. She was found with her head in the gas oven and was taken to the University College Hospital, where she was pronounced dead.

In current Indian women's writing, the representation of women's inner lives and sensitive relationships has taken centre stage<sup>[21]</sup>. Being an Indian woman writer, the writing of Kamala Das has also been mapped with this characteristic. But with the search of real love in her poetry, Kamala Das has been acknowledged and acclaimed as an outstanding female poet in India. Kamala Das was born in Punneyurkulam, South Malabar, on March 31, 1934. She is a multilingual author who chooses to write fiction in Malayalam and poetry in English. She mostly acquired her education at home, the highlight being that her family was quite conservative, tradition-following, and orthodox. When analysing her writing in a confessional mode, what fuels Das's confessions should be understood. The traces of her personal grief are found in her childhood memories as well as her early marriage. In her childhood, her one and only companion was her elder brother, who later became a surgeon. In her early life at her grandmother's house, Nalpat was happy. She felt neglected in her own family. She was from a higher Nair family and her father was an employee at the British Government in Calcutta. Her early marriage with Mohan Das – one of her relatives, who worked at the Reserve Bank in Mumbai further, became a great failure in her life. Due to the lustful and loveless nature of her husband, she entered an extramarital relationship for real love. This miserable plight becomes the ground for her writing. She gives an outlet to her suffocation through the poems. Writing is an inner urge for her. She tells in her autobiography,

"I myself had no control over my writing which emerged like a rash of prickly heat in certain seasons."

[22]

Attracting universal attention and being translated into nothing less than fourteen languages, her autobiography, *My Story*, saw the light in the year 1976<sup>[23]</sup>. On 16 December 1999, Kamala Das, a high caste Nair Hindu, converted to being Kamala Surayya and started following Islam<sup>[23]</sup>. This act by Kamala is nothing but a shock to Hindu orthodoxy. Her whole life is expressed through her work. Her candor and directness give the awareness to Indian society that women have an identity, an individual existence which she herself wants to enjoy according to her desires.

## 7. Decoding and Discussion

### 7.1. Observing Plath

Sylvia's work can be described gut-wrenching and brutally true, not just mere confessional. Her expression is pure and vivid. She speaks the very tone in the writing that she would if she were to speak verbally. Having said that, her words bring out the exact emotion and don't shy away from bringing out the literal onomatopoeia, which helps create the best personal expression.

The opening of *Daddy* develops the boot image of her obsessive nature. It also throws light on her father, a Nazi officer, and his associated brutality. The father-daughter relationship is dramatically narrated as that of Nazi-Jew obsessiveness. The emotional paralysis of the writer makes her recognise her very own father as a Nazi officer.

Extract 1

"You do not do, you do not do  
Any more, black shoe  
In which I have lived like a foot  
For thirty years, poor and white,  
Barely daring to breathe or Achoo."

(Poem: Daddy<sup>[24]</sup>)

Written in 1962, the poem is full of drama. The soliloquy displays how a father is verbally assassinated by his own daughter. Out of the poet's obsessive belief, a fantasy is created. Identifying her father, due to his Prussian ancestry, as a Nazi, the poem proceeds to be a psychological tension between her father and mother, who is of Jewish background. For Plath, her mother is leading a life like the one lived in concentration camps. The girl has a love-hate relationship with her father, and she cannot stop herself from getting rid

of her father. The hatred towards her father, leads her to emotional paralysis, recognizing him as a German Nazi in his daughter's life.

Extract 2

"So I never could tell where you  
Put your foot, your root,  
I never could talk to you.  
The tongue stuck in my jaw".

(Poem: Daddy<sup>[24]</sup>)

Extract 3

"It stuck in a barb wire snare".  
"Ich, ich, ich, ich,  
I could hardly speak,  
I thought every German was you"

(Poem: Daddy<sup>[24]</sup>)

Just like a soft tongue is enclosed in a tough jaw, the poet compares Jews being in concentrated camps enclosed in barbed wire. Here, her father being the capturer and herself talking as a Jew, she uses 'Ich' as a repeated and assertive style for German engines transporting Jews. Further, she makes derogatory comments against her partner and expresses odium. Even though Plath's destruction is evident in every word of the poem, the father's sudden transformation from Godlike to the devil, vampire, beast, and malefactor paints a horrifying picture of horror<sup>[25]</sup>.

In her work, *Lady Lazarus*, published in 1965, Sylvia speaks as if she is the female version of the biblical character. Lazarus is believed to have been brought back to life by Jesus Christ as per the Bible. Sylvia, having suicidal tendencies, tried to kill herself three times in her thirty years of life. The perfectionist in her is so obsessed with everything being prim and proper that she believes she has mastered the art of dying, too.

Extract 4

"I have done it again.  
One year in every ten  
I manage it----- "

(Poem: Lady Lazarus<sup>[24]</sup>)

In the last part, the poet speaks for all women, which becomes universal. Men work against women in different guises but their ultimate aim is to achieve control. A doctor who seems to be performing humanitarian tasks is looked

upon as 'Herr Enemy' by this poet, who feels that the doctor enjoys an undue advantage over these patients' bodies, which he can control and manipulate according to his desire. The poet finds that 'Man' is at the root of her personal suffering as well as general human suffering in this world. In this world, both 'God' and 'Devil' are male.

Extract 5

"Or a piece of my hair or my clothes,  
So, so, Herr Doktor.  
So, Herr Enemy".

(Poem: Lady Lazarus<sup>[24]</sup>)

But she cannot suppress the strong desire for revenge. She can neither forgive nor forget. She turns to destructive my theological female characters like Medusa. She warns both God and Lucifer, i.e., the entire world, of her terrifying return. She promises herself the ultimate victory by returning in the guise of Medusa and destroying MEN.

Extract 6

"Herr God, Her Lucifer  
Beware  
Beware  
Out of the ash, I rise with my red hair  
And I eat men like air".

(Poem: Lady Lazarus<sup>[24]</sup>)

Having lost her child, followed by an appendicitis operation, Sylvia was in great pain, not only physical but also emotional. In *Tulips*, which saw the light in 1965, Plath links death with purity, and birth brings peace to her. The flowers are brought to her when she is hospitalised, and she feels that they are watching over her. The redness of the flowers is perceived as he wounds, while the colour red itself forces back passion in her life. She accepts those flowers as an emotional response to rise from her physical apathy and mental numbness.

Extract 7

"And I see myself, flat, ridiculous, a cut paper shadow.  
Between the eye of the sun and the eyes of the tulips  
And I have no face, I have wanted to efface myself,"

(Poem: Tulips<sup>[24]</sup>)

She almost begins to rediscover the positive values in life like love. The poet returns to life, but 'health' seems to be far away. In other words, the poet feels physically a tracked towards life, but the soul remains unaffected by this recuperation.

## 7.2. Observing Kamala Surayya

Kamala Das accomplishes this through her wifely identity, which is governed and directed by her husband. Her search for love fails in the lust-filled world of men. Sylvia Plath also emphasizes how much women relate to their physical selves.

### Extract 1

In Kamala Das's *The Old Playhouse*, she depicts her husband's inability to fulfil her emotional needs.

".....that I came to you but to learn  
What I was and by learning, to learn to grow,  
but every  
Lesson you gave was about yourself. You were pleased  
With me body's response, its weather, its usual shallow  
Convulsions. You dribbled spittle into my mouth, you poured  
Yourself into every book & cranny, you embalmed  
My poor lust with your bitter – sweet juices.  
....."

(Poem: The Old Playhouse<sup>[26]</sup>)

According to Kamala Das, her husband had no concept of love or affection for his wife beyond what she was as a homemaker and a sexual companion. He was a total failure in the emotional and spiritual senses because he was incapable of realizing that a wife needs love and affection in addition to sex.

### Extract 2

Das's psychological quarrel due to her dwarf-like situation is taken place in *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. Cow-  
ering  
Beneath your monstrous ego I ate magic loaf  
and  
Become a dwarf....."

(Poem: The Old Playhouse<sup>[26]</sup>)

It expresses her utter contempt at her husband's egotism and dominance. He discovers complete control over her. She used to add sugar tablets to her husband's tea and administer vitamins at the appointed intervals. Her husband was a strict taskmaster who was so conceited and egotistical that she eventually lost her sense of self as a human being as a result of feeling enslaved to his whims and demands. In this situation, a wife is expected to perform certain tasks for her husband according to tradition, and the husband doesn't want to budge from the role of strict task-master because it is advantageous for him.

### Extract 3

Confession by Kamala Das, in her poem of revolt against conventionalism and against the restraints, which society has been imposing upon woman.

"..... Dress in sarees, be girl  
Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,"  
(Poem: The Old Playhouse<sup>[26]</sup>)

She depicts her as a victim of social stereotypes, which people created in mind specially for a woman, a wife, and a mother.

### Extract 4

It is clear from reading *The Old Playhouse* by Surayya from 1931 that her life as a wife has been completely up-ended by being used and destroyed of purity, timidity, and feminine force. She compares her life to the 'Old Playhouse' by expressing her lust and taste less, and she no longer has the drive to put more effort into her partnership.

"Even the air-conditioner helps so little,  
All pervasive is the male scent of your breath.  
The cut flowers  
In the vases have begun to smell of human sweat. There is  
No more singing, no more a dance, my mind is an old  
Playhouse with all its light put out. The strong man's technique is



Always the same, he serves his love in lethal doses,  
For, love is Narcissus at the water's edge,  
haunted  
By its own lonely face, and yet it must seek at last"

(Poem: The Old Playhouse<sup>[26]</sup>)

Having lost its charm to shut windows and no external exposure like the bird songs and natural smell, the poet feels suffocated in her husband's house, which is now lit by artificial electric lamps. She feels like a forsaken theatre hall which is of no use anymore. Finally, the poet expresses her indication, and not only an indication but a determination, to free herself from the prison of her husband's house and the loveless life of domesticity which she had been leading there.

Extract 5

Her candid disclosure and fearless handling of her private life are entirely consistent with the style and subject matter of confessional poetry.

"He drew me to him  
Rudely  
With a lover's haste, an armful  
Of splinters, designed to hurt, and,  
Pregnant with pain. Why  
Did I  
Not cry then, broken glass, beware?"

(Poem: Glass<sup>[26]</sup>)

According to the mentioned extract, the common interpretation is that her poems are sex-clouded writing, but her poetry is more than just sex-themed literature. Her poetry serves as a release for the pain she felt as a result of sexual humiliation. She has written extensively and in several poems on the humiliations and sufferings that she has gone through and that she has witnessed; these are the standard themes of confessional poetry.

Extract 6

In Kamala Das' opinion, the outside world is hostile to her own world. In her poem "Suicide," which is devoted entirely to this animosity,

"If love is not to be had,  
I want to be dead, just dead"

(Poem: The Suicide<sup>[26]</sup>)

The crucial component of confessional poetry is present in *Suicide* due to its title, atmosphere, and content. The struggle, in this instance, is between the real world and the poet's interpretation of her own life using images of the body and the spirit. The poet realizes that the only way out of her situation is to commit herself. She considers detonating either her body or her soul because she is unable to achieve a state of harmony between the two.

Extract 7

In *An Introduction* of 1965, Kamala Das writes herself out. She has penned her own self as a writer and become a self-motivator, and spoken about her own feelings as a writer. She has spoken directly to the fingers pointing at her and her writing.

"..... 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...."

(Poem: An Introduction<sup>[26]</sup>)

Kamala Das introduces this poem by stating that, despite her lack of political knowledge, she is familiar with the names of those who hold political sway in this nation, starting with Nehru. She then describes herself as an Indian, with a refry brown complexion, born in Malabar, who is able to write in two languages and dream in one. Next, she speaks sarcastically about her family and friends who used to warn her not to do certain things. She actually criticises these counsellors for giving her this advice since she asserts her freedom to speak and write in whichever language she chooses. She considers herself as a human being much before her gender identity. Choosing a language to speak and express oneself is as natural as breathing.

Extremely personal in nature they both emblazoned their bitter experiences. Their poetry ends up becoming a reflection of the isolated person's loneliness. No doubt, they both write in a deeply personal way, their poems take on

the form of an expression of their loneliness. They both portray the miserable situation that women face in society. Their remarks provide a perspective of the male dominance and the misogynist climate in society, which contributes to women's suffering. They alert readers to the sexual and physical exploitation of women.

### 7.3. Linguistic Observation

A linguistic analysis of Kamala Das's and Sylvia Plath's confessional writings demonstrates how their unique vocabulary choices, grammatical patterns, and metaphorical registers function as means of expressing gendered subjectivities. Both poets use language as a performative tool that subverts conventional narratives about trauma, agency, and femininity in addition to using it as a means of expression. Plath's use of violent metaphors, enjambment, and broken syntax in poems like *Daddy* and *Lady Lazarus* creates a language of rupture by reflecting a linguistic collapse that echoes her psychological fragmentation. Das, on the other hand, frequently uses a conversational tone, punctuated by code-switching and colloquial expressions, to both highlight her cultural hybridity and undermine the prestigious, male-dominated canon of English poetry in India. Plath's use of violent metaphors, enjambment, and broken syntax in poems like *Daddy* and *Lady Lazarus* creates a language of rupture by reflecting a linguistic collapse that echoes her psychological fragmentation. Das, on the other hand, frequently uses a conversational tone, punctuated by code-switching and colloquial expressions, to both highlight her cultural hybridity and undermine the prestigious, male-dominated canon of English poetry in India. Although intimacy, body, and revolt are the main semantic areas in both poets' language, there are notable differences in their morpho-syntactic methods, providing a rich field for comparative linguistic analysis. Therefore, in addition to examining confessional themes, this study looks into how their language's form and structure encode resistance, suppression, and reclaiming.

The confessional poetry of Kamala Das and Sylvia Plath highlights the intricate relationship between language, identity, and power from a stylistic and pragmatic standpoint. To place the speaker's voice inside a socially charged framework of gendered oppression, both poets use deixis, metaphor, and modality. A hostile dialogic relationship that emphasizes trauma and resistance is created in Plath's *Daddy*

through the use of oppressive war images. Das, in contrast, regularly uses discourse markers and changes in pronoun reference to construct a multi-layered self that balances private truth with public expectation. Her poetry serves as speech actions in a pragmatic sense, frequently evoking the illocutionary force of resistance, confession, or protest. The works can be interpreted through CDA as counter-discourses that subvert hegemonic norms by dismantling institutionalized silences surrounding female sexuality, domesticity, and mental health. Lexical density, metaphorical saturation, and syntactic deviation—all linguistic textures found in their poems—become places of ideological conflict, exposing the hidden workings of patriarchal discourse. The confessional mode, which is embedded through certain linguistic choices that need attention to both form and function, is therefore not just personal but also profoundly political.

## 8. Findings

The readings and interpretations reveal the worldview of domination and the same anti-female climate in both the socio-cultural setups. This calls readers' attention to the sexual and physical abuse of women. Kamala Das does this through the situations where her husband's dominance and control over her femininity. She fails in her quest for love amid the lusty world of men. Sylvia Plath also emphasizes how men could not see women beyond their bodily identities. Their poetry is united by the depressing reality that women face because they lack deep, lasting emotional connections. Das's combination of conversational tone and code-switching in *An Introduction* highlights her struggle with a hybrid identity, whereas Plath's use of war metaphors and vocative address in *Daddy* suggests a confrontational position toward male authority.

According to Kamala Das, her spouse had no idea about love and love for a woman who serves only as a sexual partner and a homemaker. He proved to be a total failure both emotionally and spiritually because he never realized that a wife required more than just sexual fulfillment—she also needed love and affection. The disappointment of love and attachment, as well as the fundamental inequality in Indian husband-wife relationships, arises from the society's dependence on a hierarchical structure<sup>[27]</sup> based on concepts of honour.

In her poem *Lady Lazarus*, Sylvia Plath conjures up the picture of a dead body being taken into the open and subjected to public scrutiny. The poet calls readers' attention to the physical and sexual exploitation of women by drawing comparisons to a large-scale strip exhibition. The males who stare at the woman's outward looks don't give a damn about her sentiments or emotions. Das's psychological fight stemming from her tiny status is depicted in *The Old Playhouse*.

The ground on which their poetry takes shape is very much common. Both have suffered humiliation in married life. Kamala Das's early marriage and loveless companionship with her husband caused her suffering. In the same way, Plath had married for love to Ted, but her marriage had ended in disaster.

In the life of Plath, there is a conflict between personal and social. There is always a gap between how she acted and how she felt. In this term, Kamala Das is different from her. Her poetry is the only tool for her to revolt.

We can see the revolt against male tranny in their poems. Both poets write of an idealised upbringing and a longing for their grandmother's house. There are references of their father figure in their poems. Both women call their father an 'autocrat'. Kamala Das is preoccupied with bodily and sexual experiences, which she narrates in her poems.

Plath's poetry covers a broader range of issues; she is concerned not just with her own self-body and mind, but also with all individuals who are oppressed by the world's strong components. Unlike Kamala, Plath's attitude is not one of forgive and forget. She projects herself not only as a woman but also as an individual, demanding her right to live life the way she wants.

Both Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das use confessional poetry to document and examine the political, social, and religious systems that create and exacerbate human suffering, even though it is frequently interpreted as the unrestrained expression of such suffering.

The speaker in *Daddy* depicts trauma as political inheritance—authority, dominance, and historical violence become internalized by conflating the father with fascist images (Nazism, oppressive patriarchy). By staging a performative resurrection, *Lady Lazarus* transforms the political economy of suffering into a place of subversive agency and challenges the spectacle of control (by the media, medical

institutions, and patriarchal expectations). Identity is self-examined in *An Introduction* against the backdrop of cultural expectations, implying that broader narratives of modernity and ideological self-definition influence the individual psyche.

The marital and domestic environment in *The Old Playhouse* turns into a political arena where patriarchal power structures control, stage, and repress female subjectivity and desire. *Glass* might be read as a commentary on transparency versus surveillance: postcolonial concerns about who has the right to speak and be seen are echoed by the female self's visibility and limitations. *The Suicide* turns personal anguish into a critique of a system that silences or pathologizes women, indicating the political inability of societal institutions to see female misery beyond moralizing language.

The social scripts that are imposed on women—the roles of wife, patient, and daughter—that splinter identity are confronted throughout her works. Recovery becomes a struggle with social visibility as "tulips" literalizes the infiltration of external demands (caregiving, healthcare, and the "cheerful" aesthetic) into the self. The speaker in *An Introduction* exposes the gaps between one's inner self and one's public persona by navigating language, class, and the theatrical masks needed for social interaction.

Poems like *Glass* and *The Old Playhouse* are saturated with societal conventions surrounding gender, sexuality, and honor; the female body becomes a subject of both desire and social policing. The speakers articulate the conflict between internal emotional complexity and external role prescriptions, rejecting the passive conformity required of women. Additionally, the social stigmatization of mental distress—particularly for women—is reflected in *The Suicide*, as hopelessness is moralized rather than being approached with empathy.

Das's writing frequently incorporates the lingering effects of religious expectations, particularly those derived from Hindu patriarchal systems, which dictate a woman's spiritual place, duty, and purity. *The Suicide* suggests that spiritual frameworks can serve to legitimize rather than to question suffering by linking religious silence or fatalism to the erasure of genuine female sorrow. When taken as a whole, these readings demonstrate that Plath and Das do more than just confess; they engage the reader in comprehending how the "personal" is permeated with social scripting, political

pressure, and religious meaning-making. By using confession as critical praxis and reclaiming agency from systems that would otherwise define, silence, or discipline the self, their literary voices serve as platforms for the exposure and weaponization of pain.

Both writers are furious with society for attempting to define them by rituals, traditions, or attitudes. Motherhood is an inseparable part of womanhood and has received due attention in the poems of both these poets.

Confession for them is a search of happiness. Kamala Das tries to find happiness in the arms of illicit lovers or in motherhood. Plath does not feel that such an escapism will solve; both poets have been termed as 'neurotic' by some critics; we find in Plath's poetry a positive assertion of the right to live her own life. For Kamala Das, there is a price tag attached to every attempt to live.

Kamala Das has managed to survive, while Plath, acclaimed as one of the most outstanding students in a free and advanced society, succumbed to the tension of trying to be a woman and an individual at the same time.

## 9. Theoretical Implications

The importance of gender and social expectations in confessional writing: Through their open, frequently provocative writing, both authors question conventional gender roles and social expectations. This poses concerns regarding how gender shapes personal narratives and how cultural norms affect the creative process.

Confessional writing as a tool for self-exploration and self-revelation: Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das both employ confessional writing to explore their deepest feelings and thoughts. This emphasises how crucial introspection and self-discovery are to the creative process.

The effects of confessional writing and psychological implication: Confessional writing's intensely personal nature can significantly impact both the writer and the reader. We can learn more about the ways that writing might be used as a form of self-expression or therapy by delving into the psychological reasons underlying the authors' confessions.

Confessional writing and its impact on the tenet of literature: Traditional ideas of poetic form and creative themes have been challenged by the works of Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das, leaving a lasting impression on the literary commu-

nity. This research exposes the understanding of the dynamic appeal of literature and how personal narratives influence creative activities by looking at how confessional writing has impacted the tenet of literature.

In a broad spectrum, the theoretical implication of study on confessional writing that draws inspiration from Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das emphasizes the significance of psychological inquiry, gender identity, and personal experience in the creative process. We can learn more about the ways confessional writing can question social norms, spark critical thought, and motivate the creation of new artistic expressions by looking more closely at these issues.

## 10. Future Research Direction

Many directions for further research in the field of confessional poetry are opened by this study, especially with regard to trauma, politics, and gendered subjectivity. The conversation can be expanded through comparative studies that include non-Western poets who have embraced confessional styles or other regional voices. The examination of confessional literature can be further enhanced by interdisciplinary techniques that incorporate trauma studies, psychoanalysis, and postcolonial theory.

However, some impediments might prevent this research from being expanded right now. Some analytical depth is limited by the lack of solid empirical data, such as reader reception surveys, interviews, or archive insights into the poet's purpose. The breadth and reception of future research may also be impacted by region-specific limitations, such as restricted access to translated versions or social taboos surrounding sexuality and mental health. Filling in these gaps could improve future work's contextual sensitivity and methodological transparency.

## 11. Conclusions

By exposing the ideals of quiet and submission that have historically been forced on women, Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das challenge established power systems when viewed through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

Kamala Das, in Indian English poetry, pioneered what Sylvia Plath was doing in American poetry. These female poets' act of resistance and self-assertion snowballed into

a movement and then a genre. The confessional urgency is conveyed in their poems. Kamala Das believes that the poet's raw material is neither stone nor wood but the poet's personality. Likewise, Sylvia Plath presents herself in her own poetry. Though all this is very much true, the element of universality in their writing cannot be side-tracked. Kamala Das says, "Whether something happened to me or to another woman is immaterial; what really matters is the experience, the incident." Like Plath's poetry, her work is not merely 'a cry from the heart', it is artistic. Both poets pick up the raw material for the poems from the events and incidents of their lives, but the presentation of it is marvellous. One can see the glaring artistic touch they give to their work. The images, metaphors, narrative technique, rhythm, and outstanding vocabulary. The colloquial simplicity and spontaneity make their poetry a great art. Their personality and backgrounds have many similarities and differences, but the art of poetry makes them identical. The generalization of their personal experiences lifts their poetry into the realm of universal truth. This study is apt to current conversations of gender discourse, confessional writing, and a multidisciplinary approach to comparative genres. This proves to be a value addition to critical literary articles.

## Author Contributions

Conceptualization, Seema Ghangale; methodology, S.G.; software, H.T.; validation, S.G., M.J., and K.D.; formal analysis, S.G., and A.B.P.; investigation, K.D. and S.P.; resources, S.P.; data curation, H.T.; writing—original draft preparation, S.G.; writing—review and editing, S.G. and M.J.; visualization, H.T.; supervision, S.G. and M.J.; project administration, S.G.; funding acquisition, S.P.. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

## Funding

This work received no external funding.

## Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable, as the study does not involve humans or animals.

## Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable, as the study does not involve humans or animals.

## Data Availability Statement

The data used in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

## References

- [1] Larmour, J.D.H., Miller, P.A.C. (eds.), 1998. *Rethinking Sexuality Foucault and Classical Antiquity*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, USA. Available from: <https://books.google.co.in/books?hl=en&lr=&id=xFNp6KyKZDAC&oi=fnd&pg=PA138&dq=The+History+of> (cited 19 May 2025)
- [2] Aycock, A., 1995. "Technologies of the self:" Foucault and Internet discourse. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. 1(2). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.1995.tb00328.x>
- [3] Goldthwaite, M.A., 2003. *Confessionals*. College English. 66(1), 55–73. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.58680/ce20032824>
- [4] Orr, P., 1962. A 1962 Sylvia Plath Interview With Peter Orr. Available from: <https://www.scribd.com/document/294328934/A-1962-Sylvia-Plath-Interview-With-Peter-Orr> (cited 19 May 2025)
- [5] Travis, I., 2009. I Have Always Been Scared of You: Sylvia Plath, perpetrator trauma and threatening victims. *European Journal of American Culture*. 28(3), 277–293.
- [6] Mehta, N., 2010. Similarities and Dissimilarities in the Poetry of Kamala Das and Sylvia Plath. *Plath Profiles An Interdisciplinary Journal of Sylvia Plath Studies*. 3, 46–63.
- [7] Joshi, P.T., Gite, C.T., Chopra, A., et al., 2023. Decoding Confessional Poetry: An Analysis of the Selected Poems of Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*. 20(2), 2197–2210.
- [8] Mishra, I., 2022. Identity Crisis and Mode of Confession in the Poetry of Kamala Das. *Research Chroni-*

- cler, International Multidisciplinary Refereed Peer Reviewed Indexed Research Journal. Available from: [http://research-chronicler.com/reschro/pdf/v10i2/100206-Dr.\\_Indrajeet\\_Mishra.pdf?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](http://research-chronicler.com/reschro/pdf/v10i2/100206-Dr._Indrajeet_Mishra.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com) (cited 19 May 2025)
- [9] Ahima, K.S., 2021. Catharsis of Confessional Writing: A Comparative Study of Sylvia Plath's *Bell Jar* and Kamala Das's *My Story*. *Language in India*. 21(10). Available from: <https://www.languageinindia.com/oct2021/ahimaconfessionalplathkamaladas.pdf> (cited 19 May 2025)
- [10] Sonali, J.T.B., [Year]. Letting It All Out: Kamala Das and Confessional Poetry. *CIU Journal*. 4(1) 61–71.
- [11] Gupta, T., Sharma, A.B., 2014. Confessional Poetry in the Light of Psychoanalytic Theory with Special Reference to Sylvia Plath. *Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*. 2(11), 112–116.
- [12] Khati, B., 2020. Autobiographical and Confessional Note in the Poetry of Kamala Das. Available from: <https://tlhjournal.com/uploads/products/6.beena-khati-article.pdf> (cited 19 May 2025)
- [13] Fatima, E., Tariq, M., Arif, H.M., 2022. Confessional Mode of Feminist Poetics: Sylvia Plath on Love, Life and Death. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*. 7(1), 77–81.
- [14] Jahan, I., 2015. Confessional Poetry: Voice of Oppressed Women [Master's Thesis]. BRAC University: Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- [15] Lin, A., 2014. Critical Discourse Analysis in Applied Linguistics: A Methodological Review. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*. 34, 213–232.
- [16] Wodak, R., 2022. Critical Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis. In: Östman, J.-O., Verschueren, J. (eds.). *Handbook of Pragmatics, Handbook of Pragmatics*, 21st Annual Installment. John Benjamins Publishing Company: Amsterdam, Netherlands. pp. 426–443.
- [17] Wei, L., Moyer, M.G. (eds.), 2008. *Critical Discourse Analysis. Blackwell Guide to Research Methods in Bilingualism and Multilingualism*, 1st ed. Blackwell Publishing Ltd: Malden, MA, USA.
- [18] Rosenthal, M.L., 1967. *The New Poets: American and British Poetry Since World War II*. Oxford University Press: New York, NY, USA.
- [19] Phillips, R.S., Moore, H.T., 1973. *The Confessional Poets*. Feffer & Simons, Inc.: London, UK.
- [20] Wagner-Martin, L., 2003. *Sylvia Plath: A Literary Life*, 2nd ed. Springer: New York, NY, USA.
- [21] Vijayashanthi, A., Saranya, R., Hamsalatha, M., et al., 2023. The Quest for Identity in a Male-Dominated Society: Representations of Women in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*. *English Academy Review*. 1–10.
- [22] Kamala, D., 2009. *My Story*, 3rd impression. DC books: Kottayam, India. Available from: <https://www.scribd.com/document/365604238/MY-STORY-KAMALA-DAS> (cited 19 May 2025)
- [23] Raveendran, N.V., 2001. The Poems of Kamala Das: An Assessment. In: Rajeshwar, M., Piciucco, P.P., Bhatnagar, M.K., et al. (eds.). *Kamala Das: A Critical Spectrum*. Atlantic Publishers & Distributors (P) Ltd.: New Delhi, India.
- [24] Plath, S., Hughes, T., 1981. *The Collected Poems of Sylvia Plath*, 1st ed. Harper & Row: New York, NY, USA.
- [25] Connell, S.M., 2021. There Was a Young Woman Who Lived in a Shoe: Understanding the Juxtaposition of Love, Hate, and Patriarchal Confinement in Sylvia Plath's Poem "Daddy". *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*. 12(5), 48–51. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7575/aialc.all.v.12n.5.p.48>
- [26] Das, K., 1973. *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*. Orient Longman: New Delhi, India. Available from: [https://books.google.co.in/books?id=F4WM37yIoroC&printsec=frontcover&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.co.in/books?id=F4WM37yIoroC&printsec=frontcover&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false) (cited 19 May 2025)
- [27] Sharma, N., Tripathi, P., 2023. From Orthodoxy to the Universal Logic of Human Rights: A Case Study of Film *Thappad* (The Slap). *Gender Studies*. 22(1), 126–143.