1. INTRODUCTION

Confessional poems were a serious adieu from the modern poetry in the first half of the twentieth century. The modernist poet used poetry as an escape from personality whereas the poets of confessionalism used I as a dominating aspect in poems. Poets of American genre like Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, and W.D. Snodgrass in the late 1950s and early 1960s wrote poems much ahead of their era. Plath and Anne Sexton were highly influenced by Lowell and their writing was mainly imbibed of his much acclaimed work. Chronologically, however he cannot be called as founder of this movement, as it was W.D Snodgrass, who published his “Heart’s Needle” earlier. Even Theodore Roethke had written his confessional verse “Lost son” as far back as 1948. Back in India the form of confessionalism can be traced in the poems of Nisim Ezekiel, A.K.Ramanujan, Parthasarathy, Daruwalla, Mahapatra, Vikram Seth, De Souza, Sarojini Naidu, Toru Dutt and Kamala Das. They sidelined themselves from writing of contemporary poems and directly involved themselves in the poems. The confessional poetry scribbled with theme that was not legitimate art form at the time of its origin. The poets were at their ease while writing poetry about death, depression, trauma, lust and even sex in a very casual and fluent way without any hesitation of the fear of society, who considered such topic as taboo.

“Poetry as Confession” essay written by M.L. Rosenthal is credited with being the first application of the term “Confession” to the writing of poetry and therefore for the naming of the confessional poetry movement. This led to an entire movement of 20th century poetry being called as “confessional Poetry”. It was he, who in his book ‘THE NEW POETS: AMERICAN AND BRITISH POETRY SINCE WORLD WAR II’ had labeled his friend Sylvia Plath along with Robert Lowell, Allen Ginsberg, Theodore Roethke, John Berryman and Anne Sexton as a “confessional poet”. According to Edward Byrne, a published poet and English Professor at Valparaiso University, confessional poets use first person narration to widen the scope of the poems and as a tool to increase a reader’s emotional identification with writer. In writing confessional poetry, utmost care is taken to maintain a high level of craftsmanship and use of rhythm and intonation in the poet. The legendary work of confessionalism has been a major influence on generation of writers and poets and has even continued till date. The ‘confessional’ poet; says Robert Philips, Puts few barriers, if any between his self and direct expression of that self.
The research mainly focuses on the two physically, nationally and socio-economically different but emotionally connected in sense of writing with each other. Sylvia Plath, an American born and brought up and Kamala Surya Das an Anglo-Indian origin wrote poetry of confession with such elegance and beauty which leaves the readers spellbound and mesmerizing. Sylvia Plath, a noted figure of confessional poetry in America and Kamala Surya Das, a lady with passion for being outspoken and frank from India. Plath was an adherent of modern culture whereas Das was integrated to traditional culture. The ignite of being different from the then scenario made them to ooze poetry which were more liberal and independent. The poetic verse gushed from their heart to the paper just to be figured as controversial latter.

Sylvia Plath was born in 1932 in Boston, Massachusetts, of Austrian and German Parentage. She graduated from Smith College, Massachusetts, in 1956 and from Cambridge, England, where she had been studying as a Fulbright scholar, in 1957. She then became a lecturer in English at Smith College. Sylvia’s background was academic and middle-class. Her first collection of poems, ‘The Colossus’ and other poems, was published in 1960 whereas ‘Ariel’ was posthumously published book of poems by Ted Hughes. Her only novel, ‘The Bell Jar’ which was published under the pseudonym Victoria Lucas just weeks before her suicide, particularly convey her attempts to discover her psychological identity and literary voice.

Kamala Das was born in Punnayurkulam, Kerala in 1934, pen name Madhavikutty was an Indian English poet and littérateur. Kamala spent several years in Calcutta, where she went to Catholic schools. She was married fairly early, before she finished her college. So she happens to be the only leading Indian English poet without a degree to her name. She began writing early and published her first poems in The Indian P.E.N. ‘Summer in Calcutta’ was published in 1965, sets the tone for her entire poetic output. ‘The Descendants’ in 1967 are about love and ‘The Old Playhouse and Other Poems’ in 1973. Her ‘My Story’ when she was convalescing in a nursing home. The confessional poets were dubbed as neurotics by the society, as they did. It was originally written in Malayalam (titled Ente Katha) and later she translated it into English. The first volume of her Collected Poems published in 1984 won her Sahitya Academy award for 1985.

Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das, a personality with different traits, the former obsessed with suicide and later with love. Their writing of poetry began at a very early age when other kids were indulged in activities like playing and enjoying the innocence of life. These poets started writing
their ideas and thought gracefully on piece of papers. Sylvia Plath was eight and a half years old, when she penned her notions and it came out in ‘The Boston Traveler.’ Kamala Das was four when she got influenced with writing of her uncle and emulated the footsteps. They reposted in akin way to similar themes. Twain have chosen poetry as their genre to express their intense emotions. They float in the same boats of introspection, uniqueness and psychology of self. All the parts of self enabled them to alter, change, add and modify different aspects of themselves in order to gain social acceptance in society.

This study enunciates the Confessional Element in the poems of Sylvia Plath and Kamala Surya Das. Without consideration of life of two personas from childhood to the age of being recognized as poetess, the true essence of confessionalism cannot be evaluated. The background in which they were brought up had a very prominent role to play in their writings.

The Psychic landscape allows the poet to live side by side in distinctly different, yet simultaneously unfolding worlds. According to Alexander Long, The psychic landscape is the most grandiose and necessary metaphor poets have, for its tenor and its vehicles are interchangeable.4

Neither Sylvia Plath nor Kamala Das had used landscape poems to give the impression of a spontaneous pleasure in nature, or wish to understand the process of nature. They seem rather to serve as mirrors for a self in search of identity and truth.

The feminist trends in the poetry of Plath and Das had been an exploration of woman. They were born in the period where though the women were allowed to work but at the same time look at household necessities with the same dedication. Their poems depict traditional conflict between family and career, pregnancy, imagery of life- birth and death. Their ambivalence toward men, marriage and motherhood was always marked in their poetry.

The Summer of Love refers to 1967 where a new generation of people in order to escape from the hustle bustle of life found solace in San Francisco. The freakish throng of fledgling is often termed as a pioneer of social experiment as they opened a new vista of gender equality, communal living and free love. The concept though unknown to Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das were seen in bits and paper either in the form of ecstasy or in the form of agony.

Plath and Das were deeply attached with their children and so one can get a glimpse of their love for them in their treasured creation of poems. The poem centered is around children, dealt
with the perception of outer reality as well as inner reality reflecting the dark interior of their mind. 

Readers who are naive to the subject presume that Plath and Das describe their own life through writings of poetry. Hardly any novelists or poets embossed their picture at the cover page but being distinct from others, Plath picture on “The Bell Jar” and “The collected Poems” whereas Das Picture on “My Story” suggests before even the book is opened that it’s an authoritative tale of both. Plath and Das has been the subject of many full length biographies and countless memories, sketches and biographical interpretation.

Both the authors have remarkable similarity in their intrinsic realization of the experience as poets. They have tried the core to unchain the traditional way of writing and emphasized on poems that were directly from their heart rather than mind.