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## **A Study and Critique Diligent on Contribution of Kamala Das to Indian English Poetry**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

I am what I am, declares Kamala Das at the outset of her essay. The poetess asserts that she is uninterested in politics yet claims to be familiar with every leader since Nehru. She seems to be saying that she cannot help but have things imprinted in her. One of the most well-known feminists of the postcolonial era was Kamala Das. She wrote in both English and Malayalam, her native language. She wrote under the pen names Madhavi Kutty and Kamala Das for her Malayalam and English readers, respectively. She was dubbed "The Mother of Modern Indian English Poetry" for her enormous contributions to poetry in our nation. Because of the confessional nature of her writing, she has also been compared to literary giants like Sylvia Plath. We examine this literary icon's amazing life on the anniversary of her birth. One of the most important voices in Indian English poetry is Kamala Das. She is regarded as one of the key inspirations on Indian English poetry, and in 2009, The Times dubbed her "the mother of modern English Indian poetry" ([www.timesonline.co.uk](http://www.timesonline.co.uk)) in honor of her efforts. She received numerous honors for her writing, including the Asian Poetry Prize in 1998, the Kent Award for English Writing from Asian Countries in 1999, the Asian World Prize in 2000, the Ezhuthachan Award in 2009, the Sahitya Academy Award in 2003, the Vayalar Award in 2001, and the Kerala Sahitya Academy Award in 2005. Three poems she has written are By stating that she can recite these as quickly as she can identify the days of the week or the months, she is implying that these politicians were stuck in a cycle of time that repeats itself without regard for uniqueness. Time defined them rather than the other way around. Her contribution to Indian English poetry is the main topic of the paper.

**Keywords:** Kamala Das, Madhavi Kutty, Malayalam, contribution, Indian English poetry, Sahitya Academy

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### **Introduction:**

Everyone wants to express their self-identity, emotions, feelings, thoughts, perceptions, artistic sense, profound and trivial ideas through some means, including various art forms like novel, short story, painting, plays, poetry, autobiography, short stories, sculpture, etc. as modern life of human beings is becoming more and more complex in every stage of a man's life is filled with strange feelings that have a hint of the esoteric, exotic, or déjà vu throughout the various vicissitudes of life. Every man and woman is affected by the existentialist problem, which is becoming more complex as science advances. The psychological and social facets of human existence are confronted with growing difficulties and obstructions. Given the oppressive forces at play in this situation, a woman's position is not one to be envied. They are more open to attacks from every angle due to their marginalized status at home and on the social scale. The restrained and chained mind longs to be freed from the oppressive prison. Many women all over the world started to loosen their restrictions, express their repressed feelings and emotions, and express their identity. Many women attempted to boldly express their identities in India as well, Kamala Das being one of them. What product did Kamala Das create to brazenly break social taboos? What challenges and difficulties did she encounter? How was the author shunned in the primarily matriarchal Nair society? And how were her new writings, which some deemed sexually explicit, obscene, and occasionally graphically depicted pornography in her poems, autobiographical novels, and short works of art, received in the feudal-like society? Some of these issues have already been addressed, but new books about her that have been published after her death have made a relook and reevaluation necessary. Additionally, any canonized literary work must be reassessed in a fresh setting in order to unearth the hidden and deeper meanings that the author intended. Newspaper articles and news stories about an author's creativity occasionally appear. I became intrigued by Kamala Das's works of art, which span many decades, as a scholar. The sophisticated Indian poetess Kamala Das, also known by her stage name Kamalay Suraiya, was born on March 31, 1934. She is a renowned Indian author who writes in her mother tongue, Malayalam, and English. Even though Kamala Das' reputation and esteem in Kerala are primarily based on her short stories and autobiography, she is regarded as one of the exceptional Indian poets writing in English. Under the pen name "Madhavikkutty," Kamala Das has published a number of Malayalam works. Malabar, in the maritime state of Kerala, is where Kamala Das was born. She was born to Nalappatt Balamani Amma, a well-known Malayali poetess, and V.M. Nair, a former managing editor of the popular Malayalam newspaper Mathrubhumi. The fact that Kamala Das is possibly the first Hindu woman to

openly and honestly discuss the sexual desires of Indian women makes her an iconoclast of her generation, which is a noteworthy aspect of her character analysis. Even now, exactly ten years later, her life story is being honored in two competing biopics that will highlight various aspects of it. The first is a Tamil film by Leena Manimekalai, and the second is a Malayalam film by Kamal, with Manju Warriar playing Kamala Das. This is a really admirable way to honor one of the greatest Indian female authors. After reading "The Love Queen of Malabar - Memoir of a Friendship with Kamala Das," written by Merrily Weisbord, a Canadian author who became friends with Kamala Das and maintained a friendship with her for more than ten years, it was clear that Kamala Das' ideas and perceptions of her life and her literary works had changed to the point where it could be said that mellowness had settled in her later years. She has been conversing with Ms. Weisbord in an open-ended manner for almost ten years now, since they first became friends. The book, which was published in India in 2011, describes the author's internal transformations and her shift in perspective following the release of "My Story- An Autobiography," which shook the Indian literary scene with its ground-breaking candor. The readers were astounded by her candor and openness in her autobiography confession. Merrily Weisbord cunningly gains access to Kamala Das's heart and mind, strikes up a long-lasting friendship, and together they share experiences that cause Kamala Das to reconsider her life, her relationships, and her body of work. This ground-breaking work has shed more light on Kamala Das, who wrote many things in her autobiography, poetry, and other works impulsively and innocently. Her husband supported her decision to increase the family's income, and Das wished that she should start writing. Das was unable to use her great uncle's morning to night schedule because she belonged to the group of the fair sex. As a result, she had to wait until after her family had gone to bed at night before starting to write. Only the kitchen table was available, so Das would sit down there and begin typing after she had finished washing all the dishes and cutting the vegetables. The poetess's strict schedule had a negative impact on her health, but she believed that being ill allowed her to spend more time at home and write more. Such was Kamala Das' commitment, and it was only then that she achieved the prestigious Indian poetess status. Her husband remained her staunchest supporter as her career rose to the top. Although he suffered from his illness for three years prior to passing away, Das was remarkably uplifted and comforted by his presence. She swore no one would ever be as proud of me and my accomplishments as she was. Kamala Das's accomplishments go far beyond her poetry verse. Because I don't think one can be reborn, according to Kamala Das, "I wanted to fill me as I can manage to garner." True to her word, Das has successfully gotten herself involved in writing, politics, and even painting. Although she had been unsuccessful in 1984 when she ran for a palace in parliament, she had experienced much greater success as a syndicated columnist. Because she stated that "Poetry does not sell in this country (India)," she has strayed further away from poetry. But fortunately, her candid columns did and still do. The topics covered in Kamala Das's columns ranged from politics to women's issues and child care. The mysterious honesty of Kamala Das extends to her examination of womanhood and romantic love. She claims that becoming a woman requires a particular set of cumulative experiences. Once more, Kamala Das skillfully weaves her investigation of women's influenced by a fanatical kind of unconditional honesty with her attention to eroticism. Only complete raptness in love can do justice to such a diverse experience; a love that is burdened appears to be no love at all. Similar to the creators of ancient tantric art, Das made no attempt to hide the sensuality of the human form; rather, her artwork appears to celebrate it while also acknowledging its dangers. The central theme of Kamala Das is "Love and Sex": The main theme of Kamala Das' poetry is love and sex. She thinks that the primary emotion in a woman's heart is love. She longs for a union with a man in order to experience the fullness of love, but she is disappointed and frustrated. Her poetry is a record of her own unfulfilled love and her own sexually exploitative world, which is corrupted by the blatant absence of love and the predominance of sexual exploitation of women by men, when it degenerates into pure lustfulness and bodily pleasures. She is preoccupied with love and sex frustration in each poem she writes. Oh, they danced; they danced until they were bleeding. (Das 1965:10) The poem's funeral imagery serves as a metaphor for the eunuchs' inner vacuity and sterility as well as their deteriorating physical state. In order to convey the pathetic appearance of the eunuchs, the poetess employs funeral imagery. She writes, "They were thin in limbs and dry; like half burned logs from Funeral pyres, a drought & rottenness were in each of them." The picture gives the impression that the eunuchs endure endless suffering like "half-burnt logs from funeral pyres." The poetess, unable to satisfy herself or others as a woman, sees in the eunuchs' "writhing in vacant ecstasy" a devastating representation of her own sterility. The scorching heat of the summer scene serves as the backdrop for the drama of sterile love, which brings no emotional fulfillment, in the poem "In love," which serves as a metaphor for the poet's own scorching frustration as a woman. Because the poetess is not at all in love with the man who had her body, but rather disgusted by him, the title is ironic. The poetess experiences revulsion, which she expresses through the use of potent imagery.

#### **A brief sketch about Indian Writing in English:**

In this context, it must be acknowledged that she was one of the authors whose creative output, such as poetry and novels, contributed to the internationalization of Indian writing in English. During the time of British rule in India, the seeds of Indian writing in English were planted. The seed has now grown into an evergreen tree with ripe fruits, fragrant flowers, and leaves. In addition to being consumed by the locals, the fruits are also "chewed" and referenced in international literature. In Indian Writing in English, a wide variety of topics are covered. While still reflecting Indian culture, tradition, and social values, this literature also belongs to the canon of international literature. In Indian Writing in English, a wide variety of topics are covered. Recent Indian English fiction has been attempting to express the Indian experience of the modern problems, even though this literature continues to reflect Indian culture, tradition, social values, and even Indian history through the depiction of life in India and Indians living abroad. There are English and American commentators and critics who enjoy Indian English novels. Though India was probably a cradle of storytelling, Prof. M. K. Naik notes that "one of the most notable gifts of English education to India is prose fiction" because "the novel as we know it

today was an importation from the west."Recent Indian English fiction has attempted to express the Indian experience of the modern tribulations, even in Indian history through the portrayal of life in India and Indians living abroad. There are English and American commentators and critics who enjoy Indian English novels. Though India was probably a cradle of storytelling, the novel as we know it today was an import from the west, according to Prof. M. K. Naik, and prose fiction is one of the most notable gifts of English education to India digested' by the foreigners. It didn't occur until after all the constant feeding, pruning, and caring. Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, R.K. Narayan, and Raja Rao, to name just a few, were among the gardeners who cared for the delicate plant day and night. It is protected in modern times by a number of writers who are winning accolades and awards all over the world. Instead of being a singular and exceptional, rather gradual native flare-up of geniuses, Indian writing in English has evolved into a new form of Indian culture and voice in which India regularly converses. Since before the country's independence, Indian writers poets, novelists, essayists, and playwrights have made significant and momentous contributions to world literature. However, in recent years, Indian English writing has experienced enormous growth and success on a global scale. It has already established itself as having a distinct status in the field of international literature. In Indian Writing in English, a wide variety of topics are covered. Recent Indian English fiction has been attempting to express the Indian experience of the modern problems, even though this literature continues to reflect Indian culture, tradition, social values, and even Indian history through the depiction of life in India and Indians living abroad. There are English and American commentators and critics who enjoy Indian English novels. Though India was probably a cradle of storytelling, Prof. M. K. Naik notes that "one of the most notable gifts of English education to India is prose fiction" because "the novel as we know it today was an importation from the west."

#### **Childhood:**

On March 31, 1934, Kamala Das was born. Her childhood was split between Calcutta, where her father was assigned for work, and her ancestral home in Malabar, Kerala. Kamala Das came from a family regarded as Kerala's literary aristocracy. Her grand uncle Nalapat Narayana Menon was a well-known writer, and her mother Balamani Amma was a well-known poet. According to her autobiography, Das had a much enriched childhood in terms of culture. She was first drawn to writing when she was a young child and saw her elders engrossed in their work. She started a manuscript magazine when she was just six years old. Her brother would illustrate the verses while she wrote "sad poems about dolls that had lost their heads and had to remain headless for eternity." As she got older, she and her brother founded a children's theater where they performed plays like Kalidas' Sakuntalam and Victor Hugo's Les Misérables. All the villagers were welcome to attend the performance, which was set up on the patio of their ancestral home.

#### **Early Work and the Struggles of a Female Writer:**

At the age of 15, she was married off to Madhava Das, an employee of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), and they relocated to Bombay. She had to figure out how to balance the demands of her 'duties' as a wife and mother with the expectations of her husband, her family, and society at large when she was very young. A woman had to establish herself as a good mother and wife before she could succeed as a writer in that era, according to the author. And that required waiting for a very long time. That required holding off until later in life. I couldn't afford to wait. I had no patience. I therefore got my start in writing early in life. Perhaps I was fortunate, too. I tried to increase the family's income, and my husband appreciated that. So he gave me permission to write at night. I was allowed to stay up late and write until dawn after finishing all of the chores, feeding the kids, him, and cleaning up the kitchen. And that had an impact on my health. She made an effort to give voice to a generation of women who were confined to the home and saw themselves as a commodity to be exchanged through marriage through her poetry. She gave the women in her poems a human quality, showing them to have the same desires, pain, and emotions as men.

#### **Indian Women writers and IWE:**

Women's writing was regarded as a potent vehicle for modernism and feminist statements in the 20th century. Feminist writings in Indian English literature have achieved phenomenal success over the past 20 years. The generation of wealthy and predominantly educated Western women writers is currently in existence. Their books cover both current, urgent issues affecting women and those that have long persisted in society. The publishers believe that these types of provocative themes and commercials used by the female novelists are the reason why literature has managed to survive. They are incredibly frank in how they describe the entirety of the female experience. Their essays provide a window into the mysterious, inaccessible female psyche. The majority of these books explore the frustrated housewife's psychological pain.

Kamala Das vehemently bemoans the fact that no one takes women's wishes, aspirations, individuality, or even frustrations seriously. They are all held captive by male ego, egotism, and greed. In such dreadful circumstances, Kamala Das finds herself entrapped and suffocated. Women are frequently singled out and taken advantage of in society. Kamala Das vehemently bemoans the fact that no one takes women's wishes, aspirations, individuality, or even frustrations seriously. They are all held captive by male ego, egotism, and greed. In such dreadful circumstances, Kamala Das finds herself entrapped and suffocated. Women are frequently singled out and taken advantage of in society. Their domestic work is not regarded as noteworthy. They lack access to basic health and educational facilities. She rebels against female dwarfing brought on by male dominance: Their domestic work is not regarded as noteworthy. They lack access to basic health and educational facilities. She rebels against female dwarfing brought on by male

dominance:

*You called me wife  
I was taught to break saccharine into your tea and  
To offer at the right movement the vitamins. Cowering  
Beneath your monstrous ego I ate the magic loaf and  
Became a dwarf. I lost my will and reasons, to all your  
Questions I mumbled incoherent replies (The Old Playhouse).*

In her autobiography, *My Story*, she describes her own miserable situation and says, "I settled down to housekeeping and sewed the button on and darned our old garments, all through the hot afternoons. I brought my husband's tea and a plate of snags in the evening. I distracted myself with boring housework while my spirit screamed, "Escape from this trap!" According to Kamala Das, because men rule and govern society, there is a social code of conduct for women. It tries to prevent women from realizing their potential by trapping them in motherhood and marriage. This results in a woman's dependence on men and a sort of self-negation on her part. Kamala Das wants to eradicate Indian society's outdated values. She seems to be serving as the unofficial spokesperson for the Indian equivalent of the women's liberation movement in one of her essays titled "Why not more than one Husband."

This wish is a result of the frustration and hopelessness she has experienced throughout her life as a result of being a woman. Thus, Kamala Das raises our awareness of how outdated values can obstruct a person's ability to grow emotionally and intellectually through her defiant self-assertions. She questions whether she is content in her roles as a wife and woman because she is in such a rebellious mood against the traditional society: Is this happiness, which is buried beneath a man, for you, woman? It's time to reclaim life; the world has much more to offer than just his six-foot frame. It appears that she wants to educate women about their freedom and uniqueness. She seeks to free them from the bonds of society and emancipates them. Similar to this, in "Sunshine Cat," she talks about obnoxious male partners who treat a woman like nothing more than a plaything. Such charlatans embrace her; even her husband treats her like this. As a result, when the writer of life arrives, her husband abandons her because she is no longer warm and is inconsolable. Next, according to Kamala Das, love is an experience of sex that goes beyond sex and is the soul's fulfillment in the body. She regrettably discovers that her body is accepted at the expense of her soul in every romantic relationship. "My affairs have not been sexual," she admits. I have a cold disposition. I have my fill of my husband's sex. I was craving something else instead (*My Story*). She seeks a soul mate in her partner, someone who will cherish both her body and soul. She enters into her relationship with reasonable hopes and dreams: "I had expected him to take me in his arms and stroke my face, my hair, my hands, and whisper loving words. I had anticipated that he would learn Hindi.

#### **Feminine Sensibility Presented by Kamala Das:**

Kamala Das is a singer with a feminine sensibility who rebels against social norms and restrictions intended to oppress women in a world that was created by men. According to R.R.S. Lyengar, Kamala Das has a fiercely feminine sensibility and is unafraid to express the hurts she has experienced in a world that is largely insensitive and created by humans. She expresses a fierce sense of self-awareness in her poetry. A woman's point of view is crucially specific in how she frames her vision. Women are not seen as beings by men, but rather as objects or playthings. She claims,

"These men who call me  
Beautiful not seeing  
Me with eyes but with hands"

She is a rebel who rejects all societal norms, traditions, and conventions. She became a social rebel after being unable to find happiness in love. Her life and poetry have both been unconventional. She observes a reflection of her entire suffering womanhood in her own life. "This claim for economy really flows from the felt sovereignty of her individual existence," Lyengar observes. She is consistently and exclusively herself. In her poetry, she shattered established, conventional norms and values and affirmed a way of living that is distinguished by an outlandish, incredibly contemporary viewpoint. Her poetry has a feminine sensibility that is honest and straightforward.

#### **The Poetic Style of Kamala Das:**

Kamala Das has developed a style that is distinguished by a casual simplicity and clarity. She demonstrates a remarkable command and ease over the use of English. When she is experiencing emotions and starting to write, words just flow to her. "The language used is not important," she says. What matters is the thought that each of her chosen words conveys. She pulls words with ease from a large stock, but unlike Nissim Ezekiel, she doesn't wait for them. She gets words in a flash when an idea strikes. It doesn't imply that she speaks carelessly. She uses words that most effectively convey her emotions because she understands the value and significance of language. Her poetic style is distinguished by its felicity of diction. She has developed a poetic style that is conversational. Then, diction has nothing to do with esoteric, mystical, or spiritual musings or chants. Her personal poetic style piques her emotions. According to David McCutchan, "Her primary concern is to convey to her readers the intensity of her feelings, her frustrations, and her disillusionments and this concern determines her use of language, as well as frequent word repetition and her frequent eclipses which have attracted a great deal of criticism."

#### **Images and Metaphors in Kamala Das's Poetry:**

The creation of an image using words is called imagery in poetry. It is a tool for creating a vivid and realistic experience of life. Poets who struggle with creating vivid images are unsuccessful in their craft. It takes advantage of various sensory perceptions, precisely captures his experiences, and

evokes a vibrant, alive image of life. The artful use of metaphors is a key component of the "image-making" process. Similes, contrasts, and the "picture-making" or concretization of emotions are all examples of symbols, which are used to signify something other than what the object literally means. It is a powerful tool that results from the imaginative vibrational perception of reality. Without appropriate symbolism, a piece of art is worthless, just like a flower without scent. No matter how deep and profound a thought may be, it has very little impact on how it contributes to understanding the pattern of images and symbols. In order to make her poetry impressive, accurate, and concise, Kamala Das, who was influenced by these writers, used the imagist and symbolist techniques. Kamala Das speaks with simplicity and clarity. Her writing expresses her emotions, and she converses with her readers on a human level. Her uniqueness and distinction are found in this. There aren't any complicated constructions, abstractions, or complexities. Because she uses symbols to represent the everyday and the familiar, her language has a wider range of expressive possibilities of the heat and sun. House and window, cremation and burning, natural objects, human anatomy, sleep, and the sea are some of Mrs. Das's poems' most prominent imagery. The female body is a storehouse of beauty and chastity that is exploited to the fullest while the male body is a source of corruption and exploitation. The poetess presents a deft analysis of male psychology in her poem "The freaks."

He talks, turning a sun-stained  
Cheek to me, his mouth, a dark  
Cavern where Stalactites of  
Uneven teeth gleam, his right  
Hand on my knee can't this man with  
Nimble finger tips unleash  
Nothing more alive than the Skin's lazy hungers...

She is shown images of horror and ugliness by the male anatomy. It is portrayed as disgusting and harmful. In general, a lover is alluring and pleasant to his or her beloved, but in this case, the woman finds him repulsive. His mouth reminds her of the white calciferous growth that frequently forms on cave roofs, and his cheeks are sun-stained and so brownish in color. Here, the ugly images emphasize her attitude of denial and rejection. It represents her uprising against the dominance of men and the male ego. It is clear that she has a forced relationship with her husband because she highlights the emotional sterility and emptiness of her marriage as well as the depth of her misery as a wife who was forced to submit to a man she found disgusting and with whom she had no emotional connection at all. She is aware of the glory and beauty of the human anatomy and is drawn to it, but she finds its varied lustfulness repulsive, as previously stated. Additionally, she is aware of the disease and rot that human flesh is prone to, and this awareness influences her imagery.

#### **Conclusion:**

We can state with confidence that Kamala Das's poetry flawlessly uses a variety of images and symbols. Her pictures are more useful than pretty. They are used skillfully and appropriately and are quite stroking and arresting. She sometimes struggles with creating images and symbols, so when it's necessary, she turns to this technique. Formerly known as Kamala Das, Kamala Suraiyya was a renowned Malayalam author from Kerala, India, as well as a significant Indian English poet and literary critic. While her English works, published under the pen name Kamala Das, are best known for the ferocious poems and explicit autobiography, her popularity in Kerala is primarily based on her short stories and autobiography. She was an iconoclast in her generation due to how she treated female sexuality in her writing: openly, honestly, and without any sense of guilt. However, on the flip side, she transgresses into rampant sexuality and the butt of publicity and joke. The critics generally admire her for her franker treatment of love and sex, bold presentation, and the confessional statements given. As she has written, nothing is novel. Kamala is like the majority of authors who have already begun to pursue cheap popularity. In terms of being a feminist, she can even correct, chastise, and insult her husband by allegedly referring to him as a loose character. She has a hint of the tomboy in her. She enjoys dressing up as characters from D.H. Lawrence's *March of the Fox*. She is aware of love and sex, exchange and take, attraction and repulsion, attachment and detachment. Her poetry is about a magnetic love that is intensely sensual and thrilling, and sex satisfaction is what really sets her poetry on fire. She also enjoys watching eunuch-dancing for poetic purposes. With the exception of sex and a lover, Kamala Das' poetry is extremely, excessively sexual, bodily, and sensual, and there is nothing like that to tone her up metaphysically or spiritually. To submit so many dissertations on Kamala's poetry rather than other underappreciated and sidelined Indian English poets was utterly foolish. She seems to be a jittery, bizarrely babbling, drugged-up hippie girl. Therein lies the gypsy living of a woman. Although Pt. Ravishankar is praised, the way Annapurnadevi was treated does not reflect well on him. At this point, Kamala has crossed the Lakshmanrekha. We generally enjoy hearing her, not the quite humble husband, and she keeps voicing grievances. Critics believe that she occasionally appears to be overly preoccupied with love and sex as a result of dealing with these issues exclusively. If seen from a different angle, she merely depicts the feminine longings of the society's women; she does not advocate sexual relations. She becomes a "rebel" because of her protests against the dominant social systems. Her offended feminine self-wanders off on emotional tangents in an effort to find freedom and an identity. She is persistently prevented from completely eschewing the role of a traditional wife by her traditional makeup as a conventional woman.

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