

THE BARD WHO SINGS OF LOVE AND LIFE....
A Sociolinguistic Study of Kamala Das's Works

*Thesis submitted to the University of Calicut
for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in English Language and Literature*

by

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D E C L A R A T I O N

I declare that the dissertation entitled *The Bard who Sings of Love and Life... A Sociolinguistic Study of Kamala Das's Works* is a record of bonafide research that I conducted under the guidance and supervision of Dr. B. Sreedevi, Professor, Department of English, University of Calicut. No part of the work has been submitted earlier for the award of any degree, diploma, or similar titles.

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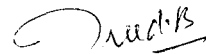


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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled *The Bard who Sings of Love and Life... A Sociolinguistic Study of Kamala Das's Works*, submitted for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, is a record of bonafide research conducted by Kamala. K. under my supervision. This dissertation has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar titles.



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ABBREVIATIONS

When a work of Madhavikkutty is mentioned for the first time in the thesis, the full title is given, but subsequently the abbreviated form, as given below is used.

DK	:	Diarikkurippukal
VM	:	Varshangalku munbu
BKS	:	Balyakala smaranakal
NPK	:	Neermathalam Poothakalam
MKS	:	Madhavikkuttiyude Kathakal: Sampooranam
MPK	:	Madhavikkuttiyude Premakathakal
MK	:	Madhavikkuttiyude Kathakal
MS	:	Madhavikkuttiyude Sthreekal
JPK	:	Januamma Paranja Katha
SC	:	Summer in Calcutta
OP	:	The Old Playhouse and Other Poems
BKD	:	The Best of Kamala Das

General Notes

The candidate has followed the fifth edition of the MLA Handbook in the documentation style.

Quotations and ideas collected from indirect sources have been acknowledged and the primary sources documented as separate notes at the end of each chapter.

The Malayalam quotations from the author's works have not been given in the main body of the thesis but included as notes at the end of each chapter.

The English translations of those quotations have been given in the thesis and they have been done mostly in Standard English. So the subtle dialect differences have not been highlighted in them. For this purpose, the original Malayalam quotations have been given.

Chapter IV contains names of a large number of trees and plants mentioned by Madhavikkutty in her Malayalam works. Since many of them do not have equivalent English words, the Malayalam words have been retained in the transliterated form.

The names Madhavikkutty, Kamala Das, Kamala Surayya, and Kamala have been used interchangeably in the thesis. They do not carry any special import.

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The English translations of the titles of Madhavikkutty's works mentioned in the thesis are given below for the sake of the non-Malayalees.

Varshangalku Munbu	Years Back
Balyakalasmaranakal	Childhood Memories
Neermathalam Poothakalam	The times When Neermathalam Bloomed
Diarikkurippukal	Diary Notes
Ente Katha	My Story
Vandikkaalakal	Bullocks
Madhavikkuttiyude Kathakal Sampoomam	Madhavikkutty's Stories Complete
Januamma Paranja Katha	The Story Told by Januamma
Puzha Veendum Ozhuki	The River Flowed Again
Smaranakal	Memories
Orudivasam Raavile	On a Morning
Mahimile Veedu	The House in Maahi
Rugminikkoru Paavakkutty	A Doll for Rugmini
Oru Snehathinte Katha	Story of a Love
Neypaayasam	Ghee Pudding
Koladu	The Goat
Kuttikkattile Nari	The Jackal in the Bush
Chaliyathi Kunjuvum Makanum	Kunju, the Chaliyathi and her Son
Avasishtangal	The Remains
Thanuppu	Cold
Palaayanam	The Retreat
Puthiya Oramma	A New Mother
Jadha	The Procession
Nunakal	Lies

Driksaakshi	Eye-Witness
Pakshiyude Manam	The Bird's Smell
Gosaitantha	Gosai, the Old Man
Nagnasareerangal	Naked Bodies
Swathanthra Jeevikal	Free Creatures
Sooryan	The Sun
Tharissunilam	Dry Land
Radhayude Katha	Radha's Story
Rathriyil	At Night
Kuttiyum Achanum	The Child and Father
Velayudhante Bharya	Velayudhan's Wife
Raviyude Katha	Ravi's Story
Chathurangam	The Game of Chess
Verumoru Lahari padartham	A Mere Intoxicant
Prabhathathinte Rahasyam	The Secret of the Morning
Vakkellammavan	The Lawyer Uncle
Pattangal	Kites
Neermthalathinte Pookkal	Flowers of Neermathalam

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PREFACE

Any research project should have a humanistic goal, in the absence of which the result goes awry and might lie dormant and unused by the society. A literary or linguistic theory gains validity and acquires a solid nature only when applied to literary works widely known among people. Otherwise it remains as abstract thought having nothing to do with real life. One of the clear objectives of this research paper is to bring to light the social aspects of the language of Kamala Das, one of the most creative woman writers of Kerala of the present century. Kamala Das has been chosen for the study because she is a writer of unusual genius surrounding whom there are a lot of misconceptions thrown up by immature reading of her literary output which is basically elusive in nature; such readings are to be seen anew and her moralistic and artistic designs assigned their true value. This paper attempts to fix the internationally acclaimed genius to the society around her and highlight her language from the sociolinguistic vantage point.

Another goal of this paper is to bring language and literature closer and thereby establish their mutuality. The work of analysing a piece of literature and evaluating an author gets completed only in the context of an author's own society and his or her position within it, both as an individual (a member of a particular social group, class or religion) and as an author (a

member of a literary group, relying on certain publishers, libraries, readers and so on). Searching for information in the work pointing to situations that had a determining effect on the writing of the work and looking for the relevant details form part of the sociology of literature. These do have a bearing upon Sociolinguistics, the study of language in relation to society. In a sociolinguistic study, the aims guiding theory and research is primarily linguistic rather than sociological.

The language of literature is not a mere carrier of message; but it forms itself a content and an indicator of many aspects related to a speech community. This thesis becomes a study of the socially relevant nature of the language of Kamala Das's literature. One thing goes for certain, as Michael Gregory affirms it:

If linguistics, reputedly the most advanced of the social, behavioural, human sciences, is to justify the claims that have been made for it, then surely in addressing its object, human discourse, it must have a goal which includes being of use in helping mankind to understand itself, become so self aware, that it improves its ability to avoid disaster and to recognize its universality. (28).

INTRODUCTION

Kamala. K. “The bard who sings of love and life...A Sociolinguistic Study of Kamala Das's Works” Thesis. Department of English , University of Calicut, 2006

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

By learning about language we will also inevitably learn about human nature

Mark Aronoff

Language is perhaps the most fascinating entity that mankind has ever come across; the ever-increasing wealth of knowledge regarding its fundamentals and the wide network into which its study has spread out bear testimony to the fact that it is one of the most widely discussed topics anywhere in the world. All communication is not linguistic; but language is by far the most powerful and versatile medium of communication possessed by all human groups. In fact, language is very much tied up with the social and cultural evolution of mankind. The origin of language coincides with that of society since a system of linguistic communication is an essential requirement for the existence of a human group. So also written language may be considered the watershed in the passage from primitive to intermediate societies. Stork and Widdowson views the importance of language thus:

Like all other living creatures, we depend on the air, water, and earth around us and in the same way society depends upon language for its very existence. Language and human culture are

intimately related and the one is indispensable to the other. [...]
 what is more, language, like society is constantly evolving and
 is subject to growth and change much the same way as a living
 organism. (9)

In fact, it is language that enabled man to achieve a form of social organization different from that of animals. The social organization of animals was mainly instinctive and genetically transmitted, whereas that of man was largely learned and transmitted verbally through the cultural heritage. Language occupies such a place in human history that some are even inclined to consider it as the most important single defining characteristic of nationality. But talking in terms of the importance of one's own language or degrading another's is no more the norm of the day. All languages in the world and all its varieties are to be valued on equal terms because they have their own role to play in human development and, in their expressive potential none is inferior to any other. George Steiner summarizes the present day language scenario thus:

We do not speak one language, nor half a dozen, nor twenty or thirty. Four to five thousand languages are thought to be in current use [...]. Further more, the four to five thousand living languages are themselves remnant of a much larger number spoken in the past [...]. It seems reasonable to assert that the

human species developed and made use of at least twice the number we can record today. (25-26)

David Crystal argues for linguistic tolerance as the need of the day in the following manner:

At the same time we need to promote a greater concern for the expressive range of a language. This means valuing all varieties and styles in a language, whether spoken or written, formal or informal, regional or social, domestic or professional. Here we are talking about a readiness to accept the variety of forms a language takes as it varies from one part of a country to another. (129-30)

The scientific study of language known as 'Linguistics' has developed to such an extent that anyone who approaches the topic has to restrict himself to a framework and study the topic along such lines. The variety of language study has reached such kaleidoscopic dimensions that linguists are forced to divide the subject in to various sub fields according to the special emphasis given to one set of phenomena rather than another. As Jonathan Culler views it:

[...] language is an extremely complex and heterogeneous phenomenon. Even a single speech act involves an extraordinary range of factors and could be considered from

many different, even conflicting points of view. One could study the way sounds are produced by the mouth, vocal cords, and tongue; one could investigate the sound waves, which are emitted, and the way they affect the hearing mechanism. One could consider the signifying intention of the speaker, the aspects of the world to which his utterance refers, the immediate circumstances of the communicative context which might have led him to produce a particular series of noises. One might try to analyse the conventions, which enable speaker and listeners to understand one another, working out the grammatical and semantic rules, which they might have assimilated if they are to communicate in this way. (18)

Down through periods, linguists have studied language from different points of view and framed theories accordingly. It is not possible even to glance through the topic of language study over a long period of history because of its gigantic propensity. But still as Mark Aronoff observes it:

Although linguists in the last hundred years have uncovered a great deal about human language and how it is acquired and used, the advances and discoveries are still mostly unknown outside a small group of practitioners. Many reasons have been given for this gap between academic and public thinking about

language, the most commonly cited reasons being: that people have strong and sometimes erroneous views about language and have little interest in being disabused of their false beliefs; or that people are too close to language to be able to see that it has interesting and complex properties. Whatever the reason, the gap remains and is getting larger the more we learn about language. (xv)

Like studies in many other fields, the study of language also has had its vicissitudes and variations in approach. Narrowing down the canvas to the twentieth century, it can be seen that the type of language study in vogue in the early decades of the twentieth century was descriptive in approach and saw language as a system of linguistic units disregarding its social background. The descriptive linguists saw language as an entity existing outside the realm of the social structure. The descriptive linguists were satisfied with preparing an account of the language variety an individual spoke; it was none of their concern as to why an individual spoke different speech styles or language varieties.

Genetics and Life Sciences in the course of their development, have given due recognition to 'language'; but their interests are in the general immutable properties of the same. So also, linguists and cognitive scientists treat the language faculty as inherent in the human brain. Their concern is

with language in the singular, invariant in space and time. According to them the faculty of language is part of man's genetic heritage and an organ of the body. They talk in terms of 'natural language' and have never bothered to consider the social side of language or its variety.

Two of the greatest theoreticians of the century, Ferdinand De Saussure and Noam Chomsky studied language elaborately; but they secluded it from the society around. Saussure called language as a 'social fact' (6) only in the sense that every language is a collective product created by its speakers and that language is essential for a society to plan further and evolve higher. Language is the basic structure on which a society is built. But the variety and diversity of language never gained Saussure's attention.

Roger.T.Bell assesses the situation thus:

Through the influence of Ferdinand de Saussure language has been seen as an 'object' describable by deductive methods similar to those of the natural sciences. More precisely language has been seen as a system with its own components and relationships describable in and for itself, not in terms of the use to which it might be put. (18)

Noam Chomsky, another major figure of 20th century linguistics, studied language as an independent entity, ignoring its social functioning. Chomskyan linguistics was built on the autonomy of the syntax and it had the

competence-performance dichotomy as one of its strong pillars. A good number of linguists in the second half of the twentieth century strongly disapproved of Chomsky's line of thinking and came up with a socially relevant view of language. They argued that the most important aspect of language was its social function. All of them were united in the conviction that Chomskyan linguistics was too narrow to accommodate language as a vast discipline serving a variety of functions.

Once it was established that Chomskyan linguistics was insufficient to meet the expectations of language learners, there developed different trends in the study of language especially in its socio-cultural context. Linguists like J.R. Firth and Malinowsky in Britain and Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf in the United States of America are some of the leading theoreticians who argued for an approach to language basing it on the society and the users. Edward Sapir claims that "language is a guide to social reality" and that human beings are at the mercy of the language that has become the medium of expression for their society. Sapir argued as follows:

It is precisely because language is as strictly socialized a type of behaviour as anything else in culture and yet betrays in its outlines such irregularities as only the natural scientist is in the habit of formulating, that linguistics is of strategic importance

for the methodology of social science.... Language is primarily a cultural or social product and must be understood as such... It is peculiarly important that linguists, who are often accused, and accused justly, of failure to look beyond the pretty patterns of their subject matter, should become aware of what their science may mean for the interpretation of human conduct in general.

(207)

Sociology had recognized the role of language in society at a very early time of its growth; but viewing language as a necessary prerequisite of every human group sociologists never bothered to study it in depth. Similarly, linguistics also generally disregarded the analysis of the social aspects of language; but coming to the twentieth century the gulf between the two disciplines has narrowed and given rise to the birth of sociolinguistics. **Sociolinguistics may be defined as the study of language and its users undertaken simultaneously. Sociolinguistics considers speech in all its social dimensions. Variety forms the central theme of sociolinguistics.** As Pier Paolo Giglioli views it:

Sociolinguistics has shown that speech is not the haphazard result of mere individual choices, the manifestation of a person's psychological states, but that it is remarkably patterned. [...]. Systematic variations of speech behaviour have

been shown to reflect the underlying constraints of a system of social relations. (8)

This branch of language study stands on an equal footing with many others because the close connections between society and language are an undeniably solid one. Features of a person's speech express aspects of his physical or psychological identity—factors such as age, sex, class, region, body type, intelligence etc. The fact that language displays its speaker's identity forms a basic tenet of sociolinguistics. Coulmas comments thus:

Sociolinguistics is concerned with “real- life” language issues in social context. While formal linguistics constructs a simplified language whose behaviour can be predicted, sociolinguistics tries to cope with the messiness of language as social phenomenon. The concept of language upon which sociolinguistics is predicated differs in characteristic ways from that of formal linguistics. Rather than looking at language as a self-contained fixed structure, sociolinguistics puts language change and variation at the center of its deliberations. (Sociolinguistics 564)

One of the basic findings of sociolinguistics is that, although language and language usage are both structured, the latter responds more sensitively to extra-linguistic influences. There have been a number of studies that address

themselves to the topic of how social factors related to speech events influence them. Such studies have shown that verbal communication is a process in which a speaker selects from among a repertoire of available codes, the most suitable one for the situation at hand. The selection of the linguistic alternates is dependent on features of the social environment and as such they are considered as lying outside the structure of language itself. (Basso 68)

Sociolinguists do not look at language as a mere carrier of literary message. In literary works, especially, the function of language goes much beyond the level of mere denotation. J. A. Fishman, one of the most known sociolinguists of the 20th century asserts thus:

Language is not merely a means of interpersonal communication and influence. It is not merely a carrier of content, whether latent or manifest. Language itself is content, a referent for loyalties and animosities, an indicator of social statuses and personal relationships, a maker of situations and topics, as well as, of the societal roles and large-scale value-laden arenas of interaction that typify every speech community.

(4)

Coming to the second half of the twentieth century, language is no more viewed as a rigid, monolithic structure. The notion of the homogeneity of language or the assumption that all members of a language- community speak

exactly the same language has been done away with as mere fiction. Throughout the world, one notices differences of accent, vocabulary and style even among people who speak the same language. Countless variations are possible in human speech. No two people speaking the same language speak alike. Even the father speaks differently from the son and one daughter differs from another daughter in this respect. Each person speaks an individuated form of language called by linguists as *idiolect*. Similarly, one individual himself varies his style of speaking and uses different varieties determined by socio-cultural factors. The French scholar Schuchardt, in 1885, referred to this fact when he commented, “the pronunciation of the individual is never free from variations”¹(qtd. in Chambers 11). A few decades later Edward Sapir who studied language to the core implied the same thing by his statement, “every one knows that language is variable”.(38) Sociolinguistics, thus studies the verbal habits of an individual who is a member of a speech community. Florian Coulmas who has avidly studied the subject comments thus:

The fact that Sociolinguistics, like other social sciences, is grounded in the western tradition is not because it is original, but because it is original in the west, and because theories and methods developed in the west are more likely to be noticed in other parts of the world than vice versa. Both Japan and India,

to mention but two examples, have rich traditions of linguistic scholarship, which sought the link with society long before Sociolinguistics, as we know it today came in to existence. (The Study... 20)

Coulmas adds that anyone going through the history of linguistics in India comes to notice the fact that the social dimension of the relationship between standard language (Sanskrit) and dialects (Prakrits) has been known for centuries and that socially indicative speech varieties have long been investigated. But the languages and dialects followed here based on the caste dependant society had no relevance in any other country and so they were not studied in any other part of the world seriously. Presently sociolinguistics, deals more with modern industrial societies and the fact remains that it developed as a western science. A major part of present day sociolinguistics consists of studies related to language variation and its social significance, otherwise called as variationist sociolinguistics. The observation of Basil Bernstein, the British sociologist, that language is responsible for perpetuating social inequality might have provided much of the impetus for research in to the linkages between social stratification and linguistic variation.

William Labov in the United States, pioneered research in this area and his monumental work *The Social Stratification of English in New York City* has guided many. Although some of the key concepts and assumptions were

formulated in the context of western societies, it is possible to apply them to other societies as well.

Sociolinguistics, in its early stages of growth was mainly study of dialects and the methods of investigation followed in those days were very much different from those of the present day and the aims also differed.

Quite a major part of the advances made by sociolinguists relate to studies of speech variation based on extra-linguistic factors. There are a large number of studies, which show that the varieties of language that speakers use reflect such matters as their regional, social, or ethnic origin or age or gender. Elaborate studies have been undertaken to reveal how social requirements and social conditions determine ways of speaking and conversational practices. But studies undertaking to explore the sociolinguistic dimensions of literary works are comparatively less in number.

There are a lot of differences between spoken and written discourse. In face-to-face interaction, many extra-linguistic devices are relied upon to facilitate a successful discourse. Eye contacts, gestures, intonation, and gaps in the speech – all contribute to the dialogue to proceed. Such words written down, untransformed to meet the needs of a reader removed in time and space does not serve the purpose of effective communication. The same words need to be given sufficient elaboration and contextualisation to communicate with an unfamiliar reader. Context carries a lot of importance in disambiguation

and understanding word meanings. In addition to the local context the global context is important as well. Words and their meanings are related not only to other words but also to the extra linguistic reality.

In, fact the sociolinguistic dimensions of literary works had been recognized by Aristotle way back in Greek antiquity; for him a literary work is a representation of the world and parts of the literary work correspond to various major elements which the human being comes across in his intuitive engagement with the world. These elements– the different types of people, their use of language in diverse ways, their thoughts, the events they partake of – very much become embedded in the literary work. Aristotle's study was mainly confined to the drama; but in due course of time, his components have found application in the studies of other literary works too.

Sociolinguistic elements lie scattered, covert and overt, throughout the length and breadth of a novel. The language of an author and his style clearly mark him out from other authors. In the words of Roger Fowler:

Next, as well as making us inevitably signal our perspectives on the topics we speak and write about, language constrains us to assume a style which announces our membership of a certain communicative group: this is the sociolinguistic dimension of discourse. Choices of sentence structure and vocabulary act as indicators of the nature and structure of the social group within

which we are communicating: semi-permanently in the case of our socio-economic class or geographical origin, and temporarily, in response to the shifting communicative roles which we adopt on different occasions of language use. (76-7)

Fowler adds that just the same way disc jockeys are distinguished from bishops, the sociolinguistic styles of different authors answer to their very different and strongly institutionalized, cultural roles. The style of a prose writer responds to his place in the history of prose writing; he may belong to a movement or oppose a movement; all the same he occupies a place in the history of writing. A novelist, who draws upon social conventions, chooses patterns of language, which encode the thoughts, values, and expectations of the society around him. The novelist whose language encodes ideas distasteful or values unacceptable to the age and the society around him easily become a target of attack; but all the same he earns a place for himself in the country's history of writing. So, also the sociolinguistic study of an author cannot afford to ignore the language variations that set in as he/she advances in age and literary experience. How language is related to gender is another worthwhile topic of investigation coming under the domain of sociolinguistic study of writers. Fowler assesses writers in general thus:

Different novelists have their individual styles of writing—we can parody them—but it would not be true to say that they

create their personal languages out of a vacuum, for even the creative, conscious artist in written language is influenced and limited by what is available in the language at large. (114)

Apart from probing the written text looking for sociolinguistic parameters of the author concerned, analysis of the sociolinguistic principles incorporated in to the literary works also comes within the domain of the topic. The treatment of speech and dialogue in a novel is one such interesting topic. No work of literature can stand in isolation as a closed structure. Language is essentially a set of items called linguistic items and theorists like Chomsky were basically concerned with their arrangement and how they form a system. But social theorists are keen upon relating linguistic entities with social concepts. How language is used to incorporate social concepts like power, class, status, solidarity, conflict etc is a topic that is viewed from the sociolinguistic angle.

In addition to carrying out the communicative role, speech may also reflect the social relations between the speaker and the addressee, especially the power and solidarity manifested in that relationship. Listening to a conversation, a third person easily understands whether the two people are intimate or not, whether one wields more power over the other and the like. Solidarity refers to the social distance between people—how much experience

they have in common, how many social characteristics they share and how much of intimacy or willingness to get closer and such factors.

Speech very often serves to be a source of conflict among people, conflict at home, and workplace or on casual occasions. People who belong to different language areas are seen to come in to conflict on arguments regarding the superiority of their languages. At the domestic level also, trouble shoots up when the husband and wife are linguistically incompatible, i.e. they speak different dialects bearing the marks of their social identity. One might dub the other's dialect as sub-standard and the person who receives the criticism feels self-conscious and insecure. In many such cases linguistic diversity is found to be counter-adaptive but all the same it is a persisting reality.

Florian Coulmas puts the idea succinctly thus:

Verbal communication is not limited to the exchange of information but includes as one of its major functions, the shaping of interpersonal relationships. In making their linguistic choices, speakers take this function in to account. In order to adjust their speech behaviour to the communicative purposes at hand, they monitor their speech. Among the many choices they make in conversation the politeness level of their utterances is

one of the more conspicuous, and it is one where social constraints are most keenly felt. (The Study... 84)

In fact, the politeness level of a person's utterances is one of the most conspicuous part of his speech. To be acceptable to the society as far as his linguistic behaviour is concerned, one has to observe some general principles and norms covered under the term 'politeness'. 'Politeness' is a difficult term to be defined; it has to be seen as organizing one's speech behaviour in such a way as to be inoffensive to others and conforming to existing social norms regarding the smooth conduct of communication. Closely connected with the notion of politeness are terms like 'face' and 'accommodation'. "Negative face refers to the desire to be unconstrained by others in one's actions and positive face is the desire to be appreciated and accepted by others." (Coulmas, The Study... 85). The linguistic means of maintaining politeness is very important because every society is built on inequality. Politeness gestures, whether linguistic or extra-linguistic, are inextricably linked with social differentiation and choices vary with the interlocutor and the situation. Politeness is socially prescribed; in addition to the general politeness, with which people use language, the choice of pronominal forms, and address forms and indirect forms of expression are some of the generally used means of projecting politeness or the opposite of it.

Different languages and different societies make use of different strategies and methods for emphasizing the politeness content. English is generally recognized as 'the most weakly socially encoded European language'. (Mühlhäusler and Harré 134) because its pronoun system which is tripartite (I, You, He/She) represents no social distinction. French language systematically employs two forms for the second person; there is a second person – singular pronoun *tu* and a second person plural pronoun *vous* for singular address. An action predicated of *tu* requires that a singular verb should be used along with it whereas a plural verb should go with *vous*. By convention, a plural pronoun is associated with higher status and thus encodes social distinctions. As far as English is concerned the clearest linguistic markers of social relations are personal names. Each person has a number of different names by which he may be addressed, including first name, family name and also a title like Miss or Doctor. Malayalam is a language, which strongly encodes social relationships. In its pronoun patterns and address terms, Malayalam language shows many characteristic features of the periods through which it has developed. The social structure of the state is fast changing; leading to resulting language modifications; but the language still retains vestiges of the social system rooted in inequalities that went hand in hand with the caste system. These are some of the sociolinguistic elements of study that one comes across while perusing literature.

The author under study is Kamala Das, internationally acclaimed as a poetess, novelist and short story writer and fondly addressed by Keralites as Madhavikkutty. Having been short listed for the Nobel Prize and won many coveted prizes like Asian Poetry Prize, Kent Award, Academy Puraskaram, Asaan World Prize, Kerala Sahitya Academy prize for short stories, Vayalar Award, Ezhuthachhan puraskaram etc and known world wide, Kamala Das has been subjected to comprehensive study by many researchers and scholars. Each one has looked in to her literary repertoire from a different angle and much remains to be studied yet.

Speech variation and its extra-linguistic correlation form the central point of many sociolinguistic studies; but this work focuses on the language of literature. A sociolinguistic study of the works of Kamala Das undertaken here has identified the following parameters and kept to the relevant methodology.

- 1) Analysis of the societal set up of Kamala Das's childhood days linked to the linguistic utterances of the various characters in novels like *Balyakala smaranakal*, *Varshangalku Munbu*, *Neermathalam*, *Pootha Kalam*, *My Story*, and *Diarikkurippukal*.

There are many ways in which society acts upon language and language acts upon society. Kamala Das's prose works form a record of the social set up of Kerala of her childhood days. They do reveal how language as

a social phenomenon is tied up with the social structure and value systems of the society. Different dialects and accents had different social relevance. How language served as a tool for the upper castes to maintain the gap between them and the lower castes and how language was one of the stumbling blocks for the under privileged to talk with confidence or to talk to others on equal terms- such themes as dealt with by the author have been highlighted here.

2) Descriptive passages of the physical and social environment

The physical environment in which Kamala lived is very much a part of all that she has written as is the social environment. The kinship system of the 'nair' community of those days (to which Kamala belonged) as presented by her was a very significant one in the society. Its significance lies in the fact that the distinction between 'maternal' and 'paternal' was differentiated in the kinship vocabulary and it had much to do with the family set up.

In addition to the environment and social structure, the values of a society also have an effect on its language. One interesting way in which this happens is through the phenomenon known as 'taboo'. In language, 'taboo' is associated with words and expressions, which are not openly said, for there are restrictions about them. Taboo words occur in most languages and differ from one language to another. In the matter of taboo words, restrictions are more for the women folk. One of the reasons why Kamala Das has been severely criticized by the society is her boldness in using certain taboo words

and expressions, which most other writers, especially the women writers do not dare to.

3) Kamala Das as a multilingual

Another topic dealt with is a study of Kamala Das as a multilingual. As an individual who is invigorated by the environment around her, it is only natural that she possesses the languages with which she comes in to contact. She is to be examined necessarily from this point of view because such a study forms an essential part of sociolinguistics.

4) Kamala Das's language from the point of view of the socialization process undergone by her

Kamala is a person who grew up in a rich cultural heritage. She had had occasions or she created occasions to observe and study people from other cultures, countries and languages as a small girl itself. This has been so throughout her life and how such circumstances enriched her personality and language forms another object of study here.

5) The study of language correlated to gender and age forms a very important topic in sociolinguistics.

It comes within the purview of this work to examine whether the language of such an internationally recognized woman writer shows characteristic features of female writing as viewed by a certain section of the

society or not. So also it remains to be seen whether her language and creativity has suffered a decline as she advances in age.

A brief biographical sketch of the author and a casual survey of her literary output becomes an essential pre-requisite for a sociolinguistic study. This is how Rajan Thiruvoth introduces her, “Madhavikkutty is a writer who retains her identity even in the matter of her name. Kamala, Kamala Das, Kamala Surayya, Surayya, Madhavikkutty, Amy. It does not seem that there is any other writer, male or female who possesses so many names”². (trans. Malayalam Weekly 28July)

She is a poetess, novelist, and short story writer who has crossed the spatial barriers and has earned a vast reading public and at the same time become a household name in every nook and corner of Kerala. Born at Punnayurkulam in the year 1934, to V. M Nair (started his official life as a company executive in Calcutta and later became the Managing Director of Mathrubhoomi Publications) and Nalappat Balamaniamma (the reputed poetess of Kerala who wrote profusely on motherhood and maternal love), Kamala had her initial schooling in a European institution in Calcutta. Born as the daughter of illustrious parents, she had had the opportunity to come in to contact with celebrities from all walks of life and be exposed to a wide range of experiences. The insecure life in Calcutta imposed by the colonial regime took Kamala and her elder brother to their maternal ancestral home,

Nalappat, in Punnayurkulam in the present Thrissur District. The stay at Nalappat, in turn, opened up a whole new world of dreams, fantasies, and realities different from that of the city. It was a startling revelation to the young girl that the servants and other poor classes who carried out all the menial work were cruelly treated by the class-conscious society of those days. Years later she recollects in *DK* the discrimination faced by her (along with other South Indians) at the Nehru Symposium conducted in Delhi as the most deserving punishment for a member of the Nalappat family who never allowed the poor *nayadi* class (the untouchable class that occupied the lowest rung in the caste-based Hindu society of her childhood days) to come anywhere near their household. “I was reminded of the *nayadis* who used to beg aloud pathetically for alms, standing beyond the paddy fields at a far off place. As a member of the Nalappat family I deserved discrimination and contemptuous treatment”³ (trans.8).

The influence of the educated parents, the scholarly gatherings in her household, the Calcutta background – all helped to illumine the genius in her and gradually the girl flew on the wings of poesy. Herein lies the significance of a sociolinguistic study of Kamala Das’s writings, the language of which is drawn from the immediate society around her and in return she enriched the society and the nation with her language.

The active creative life of Madhavikkutty begins roughly in the year 1955 when her short story collection “Mathilukal” was published. She wrote profusely and drew her material from all that she saw around her. This prolific writer who wrote about the life around her and within her, still bubbles with her unabated enthusiasm and zest for life. This is how she comments about her style of writing:

The interest for life is the root cause behind one’s zeal for literature. Life, which is seen reflected through imagination, appears more attractive sometimes, a trace of sunlight falling on somebody’s face or the sudden bout of laughter from some corner- many things like that I store in my mind.... I examine those things while lying down for an afternoon siesta. Then some characters are born in that room. They tell me, ‘ Write about me’⁴. (trans.MK. 10-11).

Kalarkodu Vasudevan Nair who has made an in-depth study of Madhavikkutty’s stories classifies them in to four stages. He, like many others is of the view that most of her very fine stories were composed during the first stage. Madhavikkutty, differing from many of her contemporaries, opted to study each individual, his/her stream of thoughts, uniqueness and very minute emotional shades. In many of them she resorts to the technique of the limited omniscient point of view. The author herself constitutes the narrator in them;

but she identifies with the character and exposes the story through his/ her insight.

The Publisher's note to *MK* reads as given below:

The world-famous poetess Kamala Das alias Madhavikkutty is the dear writer of Malayalam. The asset of this writer is her transparent language, which has the touch of love and beauty. Some of the problems that have touched her sensibility are: the sterility that has touched upon the emotions, morality and the essence of man in the present day, the conflict between the mind and the language etc.⁵(trans.5)

Much of her writings refers to real extra-linguistic situations and they denote a referent. But along with such situations, there also exists a fictional world, which cannot be referred to extra-linguistic life. In such cases, functional linguistic elements derive significance from the fictional world created within the literary artefact. Many of the statements found in the literary world of Kamala do not have a real referent but point to a fictional one.

A casual survey of the stories of Madhavikkutty reveals the fact that almost all the stories she wrote as a very young woman have the imprint of the rich craftsmanship of the mature author. They are mostly stories with fine

external form and thematic perfection. The unique quality of Madhavikkutty's narrative technique is the intertwining of reality and imagination. This kind of mystification, according to her, is essential to sustain the interest of the readers and she is never willing to reveal the borderlines between the two. In the Preface to her *DK* Madhavikkutty admits honestly:

I may be one who searches for truth; but it is very easy for me to tell lies too. I do not feel guilty conscious when I tell lies. I play this game of telling lies to make others happy. Since I have learned in my childhood that it is a cruel game to tell lies about others, I tell lies about me only.⁶(trans)

Kalarkodu Vasudevan Nair who has recognized the revolutionary in her, comments thus in the introduction to *MK*:

Madhavikkutty had ever been a revolutionary. Not only in *My Story* but also in all other stories, she revolted. She revolted against hypocrisy, masks and falsehood. She strongly protested against the affluent for his lack of culture, the emptiness of seeming civility, the loveless discipline of the wise and what not, against the human condition and against fate itself.⁷
(trans.9)

Madhavikkutty who wrote sparkling prose stands on an equally high pedestal as a poetess of international reputation. Her most known work, *My Story* that has been translated in to many Indian languages and foreign languages turned out to be a very sensational one. The author later declared that much of it was fabricated by her and she had mixed much falsehood in it. It earned a lot of negative criticism as the life-story of a licentious woman. In the introduction to *My Story*, Kalarkodu Vasudevan Nair reports Madhavikkutty as telling him that after *My Story* was published she began to get an endless stream of letters of abuse from the public. He recollects that this was followed by a lot of discussions and debates and negative criticism verging on an attack upon her private life.

My Story had its origins in a hospitalized condition of the author for a serious heart disease. But in spite of all the mud slung upon her and the mental agony she had to undergo she was not willing to reveal how much of it was related to actual happenings and how much was on an imaginary level. It is even commented that the work was begun to “distract her mind from the fear of sudden death as well as to clear her outstanding hospital bills.”(Dwivedi 140). She bravely resisted all criticisms and took it all in its natural stead. She discloses in the Preface to the work, “I have written several books in my life-time but none of them provided the pleasure the writing of *My Story* has given me”. The incidents of Kamala’s life, from her early childhood through adulthood and youth, to the age of sickness and disease in

middle age forms only the bare outline of *My Story*. It can also be read as fanciful fiction covering the lives of many men and women.

She had to bear the brunt of attack by critics, scholars and the common man probably because she refused to abide by the conventions that govern the speech that is represented in novels. . Language of conversation has its own rules of structure. Dialect and accent reveal a person and these are easily recognized in speech. In a conversation there are many devices to link one's speech to another's and make the whole affair an integrated unit. There are conventions behind all these; the novelist carries out further conventionalisation when he transcribes these real life characters and their speech in to writing. Thus, in all literary works there is an overlap between the language of life and the language of fiction. They lie interwoven and it is left to the readers to scan them in the light of the experiences undergone by the author.

Such conventions cover technical matters such as the syntax of sentences, and also things such as the sort of subjects that can be talked about and also the sort of language that can be used in such discussions. Jeremy Hawthorn cites an apt example from the novel *The Engineer of Human Souls* (Czech 1977) to illustrate the importance that people attach to conventions. Mrs Santner, one of the characters in the novel tries to defend the 'bad'

language used in a novel by referring to how people in real world would actually speak if in the same circumstances as the novel character in question:

‘You have to read it in context’, she explains. ‘After all, those words are spoken by an anti-Nazi revolutionary who’s afraid the Gestapo will catch him. When people are afraid, they use strong language. It is a well-known phenomenon.’

Her defense is too scholarly for Mr. Senka. ‘But this is a book, Madame,’ he cries. ‘A book.’

This time it is Mrs. Santer’s turn not to understand. For her the word ‘book’ has none of the sanctimonious overtones it has for Mr. Senka, for whom a book is a household object to be taken up only on very special occasions. Mrs. Santner’s husband leans over her shoulder and whispers, ‘Now, Betty, don’t let’s get in to an argument,’ but this only goads her on.

‘I can’t help it. In context, language like that has a valid function. That’s the way people actually talk in situations like that.’

‘But they don’t talk like that in books’

Jeremy Hawthorn comments:

Each is partly right, according to his experience. This is the sort of conflict towards which the realist imperative almost inevitably impels novelists and their readers. We want the novel

to give us our recognizable, everyday world, warts and all: but that world includes taboos, prescriptions, repressions from whose attack the novel is not immune. (110-11)

Kamala Das is such a creative writer who refuses to stick to conventions for she believes that literature should express the ultimate truth; it should never be artificial; rather it should portray human beings—the interior recesses of their minds, their habits, their speech—in their essence. She is never willing to make any compromise in the theme and language for the sake of decorum or sticking to conventions. As introduction to *MPK* V.R.Sudheesh writes:

What takes Madhavikkutty to the heights of perfection, as a writer is her habit of telling stories, or ‘story telling’, which forms the foundation of all literature. It is the mental condition of a real great creative genius in whose mind all people around transform in to characters, all incidents into stories and the whole world in to a big novel.⁸(trans.13)

The beautiful childhood days when she used to listen eagerly to the stories told by her grand mother and the other elders, the thorough loyalty exhibited by the servants belonging to various castes, the unforgettable scent emanating from the wild plants and flowers of Nalappat, the dance of the eunuchs on the city streets, the wedding ceremony of the dhobis in Calcutta, the comforting touch of the loved ones, the wild nights spent along with the

lover of unusual strength, the pathetic face of the poor woman cruelly treated by the society, the all sacrificing mother, the clever woman who can win the heart of any man, the woman who derives fulfillment in lesbianism - these are some of the memories ever fresh in Kamala's mind and from which she derives her poetic inspiration.

Like William Blake, the poet who valued the innocence of the lamb and stood dumbfounded at the ferocity of the tiger, Kamala Das too turned her eyes and ears towards the stark realities of life. She blotted life in all its beauty and cruelty and whatever she wrote she did it all uninhibitedly.

The following have been identified as the basic themes of her stories:

1) children and the depths of their mind. 2) family life 3) search for love 4) varied subjects.

Madhavikkutty's stories depicting young minds are some of the best ever written in Malayalam. The story "nunakal" is one such in which the young boy Appu's mind is trampled upon by his father who is powerful enough to belittle him and turn his 'truth' in to 'lie' for his personal benefit. Appu's experiences take on a universal dimension. The child becomes unable to distinguish between truth and lie; his father affirms to his mother that Appu is simply dreaming, flying on a horse and seeing another woman in the house in the mother's absence.

Another story “Driksakshi” also takes the readers in to the much less seen recesses of the child’s mind. Mohan, the central character in the story is a boy eager to reach everywhere and observe the world around and this finally puts him in trouble. Having witnessed a murder, the child becomes the target of attack of the accomplices and Mohan thus loses his peace of mind and begins to live in fear until his uncle enters the scene and settle things once and for all.

In the stories, “Gosaithantha” and “Alavudeente Katha” the young girl feels insecure in the home environment provided by her parents; she is much more at home in the company provided by the gosai (man of the wandering group) or the old servant of the family. In the dry, rigid world of the parents, servants and other dependants have no role other than catering to their needs; but to the small girl they mean a lot because they talk to her from the depth of their hearts. Their language might be non-standard, judging by the canons of the educated and the elite. But for Kamala, their language and the world of fantasy opened up through their stories was one of the vital forces in the intellectual, emotional, and artistic growth of the girl. Small, fanciful lies and dream like intermissions embedded in the realities of life give it a much more colourful exterior and a patina finish. Stories like “Kalyani”, “Pakshiyude manam”, and “Unni” are unique and remain separate from the vast universe of Madhavikkutty’s stories. These stories take the readers to an unreal world and suddenly, along with the heroines they are transported in to the real world,

thus totally unnerving them. Very few writers in Malayalam have adopted this technique of hers; she does away with the borderlines between the real and the unreal levels of the human mind and this unusual technique makes the stories inimitable and worthy of psychological analysis. So also, images abound in the stories of Madhavikkutty; she makes use of a limited vocabulary and this language of imagery is what creates the emotional appeal and makes the readers feel the story. Madhavikkutty's language and her uniqueness and expertise in the use of imagery and how they relate to a pattern of emotions will be dealt with in greater detail in Chapter V.

Kamala grew up in close association with the poor and the down trodden, the deprived and the repressed for she understood that they formed the quintessence of life. In chapter II of *Ente Katha*, she makes a very sincere revelation:

I cannot forget the servants who created the background of our life and functioned as the strong pillars of the stage of life. They used to sweep and clean the stage before each scene of the drama started. The first servant who comes to my mind is one Chabilal who wore soiled clothes and had infected teeth. An old woman who wore eastern type chain with red stone, Tripura who had worn-out teeth, Parukkutty who wore nose-stud, Janaki

who used to walk behind me wearing green skirt - I do not know
behind which curtain they have all disappeared.⁹ (trans.18-19)

At the age of 15, her parents put an end to her formal education and got her married to Madhav Das, an official in the Reserve Bank of India. Discharging her duties as a wife and mother, along with it, she found time to embrace the poetic muse as well. Though Madhavikkutty has a large number of stories and poems to her credit and most of them deserve profuse appreciation, all have not been touched upon here. Much space has not been devoted to her poetic worth because much of her poetry is psychological in nature thus falling outside the domain of the topic of this research. Devindra Kohli who has made a thorough study of her poems observes thus: "For her poetry is a sort of compulsion neurosis, so intense is her need to find a release from her emotions. Her subject matter is her personality: beautiful, sensitive, bold and tormented"(20).

When Kamala Das's first collection of poems was published in the year 1965, it turned out to be a landmark in women's poetry in India because so far no woman writer in India had dared to write so honestly about the society, herself, her psyche and her body.

Her poem "Words" faithfully records her experiences with words and how they lead her about in life:

All round me are words, and words and words,
 They grow on me like leaves, they never
 Seem to stop their slow growing
 From within... But I tell myself, words
 Are a nuisance, beware of them, they
 Can be so many things, a
 Chasm where running feet must pause, to
 Look, a sea with paralyzing waves,
 A blast of burning air or,
 A knife most willing to cut your best
 Friend's throat... Words are a nuisance, but
 They grow on me like leaves on a tree,
 They never seem to stop their coming
 From a silence, somewhere deep within...

(Summer in Calcutta 9)

Kamala follows a style of her own; literary theories and narrative techniques in vogue do not trouble her; but she is aware that her words are only a minor part of what has already been said in the world. Kamala could never lead a detached life; even as a small girl her mind was preoccupied by the happenings around her. Like a blotting paper, her sensibility absorbed the major and minor events that went on unabatedly. How the world around

forms the source of her creativity providing material for her is beautifully presented by her in *My Story*:

Calcutta gifted me with beautiful sights, which built for me the sad poems that I used to write in my diary in those days. It was at Calcutta that I saw for the first time the eunuch's dance. It was at Calcutta that I first saw a prostitute, gaudily painted like a cheap bazaar toy. It was at Calcutta that I saw the ox-carts moving along the Strand Road early in the morning with proud heavy-turbaned men, their tattooed wives with fat babies dozing at their breasts like old drunkards in clubs at lonely hours. (157)

The poetess makes use of the same details to compose the descriptive poem "Visitors to the City":

This morning on Strand Road, I watched them come
In carts that crept through winter-mist, ox-bells
Ringing, red dust rising,
Proud, heavy-turbaned men and their wives with
Tattooed cheeks, silver on their arms and fat
Babies dozing at their
Breasts, like old drunkards in clubs at lonely
Hours. They did not once look at me, but,
I watched and watched,

Until the last cart went round the bend and
 Red dust settled on the road, and silence. (SC 26)

She talks in terms of intertextuality, as she declares in “Someone Else’s Song”,

I am a million, million people
 Talking all at once, with voices
 Raised in clamour, like maids
 At village-wells
 I am a million, million deaths
 [---]
 I am a million, million births
 [---]
 I am a million, million silences
 Strung like crystal beads
 On to someone else’s
 Song (SC 31)

In many of the poems in this collection like “The Flag”, “Someone Else’s Song”, “Forest Fire”, “An Introduction” etc the poetess goes beyond the individual or the private and depicts a broader panorama of experience.

The second collection, *The Descendants* came out in the year 1967 and it contains twenty-three poems, which are, to a very large extent, considered to be revelation of the poet's psyche. Probably, the poetess was passing through a stage of dejection arising out of personal reasons and troubled by thoughts of loneliness and meaninglessness of life, which every human being is prone to at one stage or the other in life. She says in one of the poems, "Composition",

To be frank,
I have failed.
I feel my age and my
Uselessness

The stream of thought running through the third collection, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems* (1973) is also personal or private in essence. It is not within the purview of this thesis to examine whether the poetess actually passed through such a phase in her life or whether she experienced such spells of dejection or whether she was resorting to a mystification technique of which she was fond of and the like.

Even as a young woman she had experienced divine or mystical plane of love, much superior to, physical love. In *My Story* as well as in many other books she speaks of Lord Krishna whom she regarded as 'the ideal lover'. In one place she remarks thus:

Through the smoke of the incense
 I saw the beauteous smile of Krishna
 Always, always, I shall love you I told him,
 Only you will be my husband
 Only your horoscope will match with mine

She was also careful to familiarize her sons with Lord Krishna through playful methods. In *My Story* she recollects hiding under the cot and talking to her small child as though she was Krishna, thus trying to leave a permanent impression upon him as to how powerful and comforting the presence of the Lord can be. In the prose passages of *My Story* as well as in her poetry she turns to a conversational tone as she mentions Lord Krishna. In the poem titled “Radha” this is how she presents her intimacy with the Lord:

Everything in me
 Is melting, even the hardness at the core
 O Krishna, I am melting, melting, melting
 Nothing remains but
 You...(Descendants9)

There is a very similar utterance in *My Story* too:

Free from the last of human bondage, I turned to Krishna. I felt that the show had ended and the auditorium was empty. Then He came, not wearing a crown, not wearing a make-up, but

making a quiet entry. What is the role you are going to play, I asked him. Your face seems familiar. I am not playing any role, I am myself, He said. In the old playhouse of my mind, in its echoing hollowness, His voice was sweet. He had come to claim me, ultimately. Thereafter he dwelt in my dreams. (195)

A.N. Dwivedi observes striking similarities between Kamala Das's autobiography and her poetry:

Both have an urgency of expression, a mood of confession, a lyrical effusion of powerful feelings. The latter part of the autobiography is littered with the poems of her choice, which serve the purpose of epigraphs setting the tone and the temper of a particular chapter in it. There are beautiful images, oratorical flashes, and monosyllabic expressions in both. (146)

To quote some examples,

- 1) I wanted like Sita to disappear in to the bowels of the earth. (*My Story* 42)
- 2) In Bengal, the rain falls suddenly, with no warning, like the hysterical tears of a woman. (*My Story* 74)
- 3) Like alms looking for a begging bowl was my love, which only sought for it a receptacle. (*My Story* 124)

4) The spring dehydrating like a grape, meek cow-smells on the breath
of winds. (SC 19)

5) Even dreams are flat

And Sepia

They fade with chlorophyll

Under harsh bathroom lamps (SC 23)

6) What is this drink but

The April sun, squeezed

Like an orange in

My glass? (SC50)

The Alphabet of Lust is a fine novel in English (1976) depicting the theme of how devastating illicit love and political corruption can be in individual lives as well as in national stability. The heroine of the novel *Manasi* is an embodiment of sexual debasement and her lover, Vijay Raj, that of political corruption. Kamala Das, no doubt, intends the novel as an eye-opener to the truth that illicit relationships in personal life or at the political level are ruinous. She also reminds the readers that women who do not fulfill their motherly duties and wifely duties are doing so at the peril of many lives.

Her literary output which spans a period of more than five decades is increasing in volume and all cannot be touched upon here for some are irrelevant in the context of the topic taken up here. Sociolinguistic elements

are mostly found in her prose works where she memorises her past. Her novels *VarshangalkuMunbu*, *Balyakalasmarnakal*, *Neermathalam Poothakalam*, and *Ente Katha* are not elaborated here because they form the major content of chapter IV. Madhavikkutty's Malayalam works are touched upon in greater detail as they throw more light upon her upbringing and also because she has given much importance to the nuances of Malayalam dialects of the various people with whom she had close associations and which she kept precious in the receptacles of her mind to get ripe and seasoned for the generations to come.

This thesis is divided into five chapters including the introductory chapter. The appendix at the end of chapter V contains an interview with Kamala Das held at her residence on 3/4/2006. She was kind enough to spare ample time for the sake of the interview and thus enrich this study. The discussion throughout could not be restricted to the social aspects of her language because such a creative genius cannot be limited by a single dimension.

A brief chapter wise summary of the thesis is presented below:

Chapter I introduces the topic of language study as a very interesting and multifaceted field, which is being studied all over the world with renewed vigour. Man is, in fact, awed by the variety of several thousand languages and dialects expressing a variety of worldviews, literatures and

ways of life. Nobody can recreate the past or plan for the future without making recourse to this wonderful phenomenon called language. The scientific study of language known as 'Linguistics' has developed along different lines with theoretical basis and immense practical applications. This chapter highlights the need to view this fascinating object from various angles of which sociolinguistics is just one. In fact language can be studied in general or as particular languages from different points of view. According to the point of view or emphasis given to one set of phenomena rather than another, the field of linguistics can be divided into various sub fields. 'psycholinguistics', 'neurolinguistics', 'ethnolinguistics', 'sociolinguistics' and the like have different theoretical frame work from which language is viewed. These areas of study overlap at various certain points, but each one has developed along its own lines. Of these, sociolinguistics is one area that has gained much prominence in the second half of the twentieth century and continues to do so. Studying language in relation to society has been a part of Anthropology and also Sociology. But they have viewed language as a general feature of every society and have not studied its causal influence on social action. 'Sociolinguistics' touches upon language – both speech and written language – in every aspect of its interrelation with society.

Chapter I brings three areas – language in general, the social background of language, language of literature – under one roof for the purpose at hand i.e. a sociolinguistic reading of the works of Kamala Das.

Chapter 1 also briefly goes through the literary canvas of Kamala Das especially her major works in Malayalam and the more known ones.

Chapter II entitled “Sociolinguistics – Origins and Growth” is a comprehensive study of the subject – the circumstances under which the subject grew, matured and earned a place for itself as a branch of linguistics which the social sciences cannot ignore and which scholars as well as common people find, has something to do with their everyday lives. Sociolinguistics was mainly ‘dialect studies’ in the early phase of its growth; but in the present decade its chief constituent part is ‘quantitative sociolinguistics’ or ‘urban sociolinguistics’. Topics like ‘language planning’, ‘language acculturation’, ‘language and socialization’; ‘demographic studies in language’ are all equally important areas coming under ‘sociolinguistics’. This thesis only casually mentions such topics since they fall outside its scope. The most important thing to be mentioned in this context is that sociolinguistics has done away with the notion of ‘homogeneity’ of language and the superiority of one language over the other. Sociolinguistics challenges the assumption that all members of the same language community speak the same language. There are obvious differences of ‘accent’ and ‘dialect’ among speakers of the same language community and this variety forms the central point of sociolinguistic studies. In fact Sociolinguistics is not a subject of recent origins or restricted to a few places. Chapter II also lists the major figures of the century that viewed language as a social phenomenon and

believed that language is part of the culture or society, which uses it. Noam Chomsky and Ferdinand de Saussure have been dealt with because they are linguists who viewed language as an independent entity and studied language as a structural unit, secluding it from the social context. Chomsky's perspective of approaching language as a closed system is held by many to be indirectly responsible for the growth of sociolinguistics.

Chapter III deals with certain basic sociolinguistic concepts because such familiarity is essential for a proper grasp of the subject. Otherwise, the study stumbles upon certain terms, which are at times confusing and even used by researchers with varying shades of meaning. Some of the terms dealt with in detail include 1) speech community 2) language 3) dialect 4) bilingualism 5) diglossia 6) code- switching 7) pidgin, and 8) creole.

Chapter III also looks at the socially analyzable correlates of language varieties. In fact, language variation and social stratification forms one of the most interesting areas of study coming under sociolinguistics. Although some of the key concepts and assumptions were formulated in the context of western societies, it is possible to apply them to other societies as well. The commonly observed social factors related to speech varieties are class, sex, age, ethnicity/ race and the context of speech.

If the first three chapters identify sociolinguistics as a discipline having much to do with the every day lives and speech of people, chapters IV and V

are an earnest attempt at applying certain sociolinguistic theories on the language and works of Kamala Das. Society is a web of social relations; social relationships depend on the social interaction of the constituent members of a society. How mastery over language was advantageous to the writer and how it made her feel different from the underprivileged groups have been highlighted in this chapter. The theories of Basil Bernstein, a British sociologist of the twentieth century have been found to be very relevant in this context because Bernstein has dealt with in detail the topic of how a society's distribution of powers are very much related to language uses. The two terms 'restricted code' and 'elaborated code' were initially used by Bernstein in the study of the educational disadvantages suffered by certain sections of children in industrial Britain, and it has been later stretched to include all studies related to the connections between language and class differentiation.

Madhavikkutty has devoted pages to the description of the social and physical environment, which forms the background of many of her works. Those parts need to be included compulsorily in a sociolinguistic study of this sort. Kamala was so fond of flowers, plants, trees birds and animals around her and the unusual identification she made with them has infused her language with their smell and colours. When it comes to the matter of the flora and fauna around her, not only her poetic sensibilities are aroused but she also turns in to a botanist who can identify each plant around her. She

categorizes not only the plant world around her; her books reflect upon the kinship systems and terminology practised among the 'nair' community of those days. She touches upon taboo words and expressions for the sake of maintaining honesty in her words and also since she wants to do away with certain existing false notions regarding love and sex. She lets loose her imagination and comes out with true facts which many people do not say for fear of the society.

Kamala Das is a writer who claims solidarity with the women folk of the world and longs to see them playing their role in all positive activities. She declares that she is one with them in the poem "Composition" as follows:

We are all alike

We women,

In our wrappings of hairless skin.

All skeletons are alike (*OP* 6)

But she has not imbibed the negative spirits of some who are in favour of gaining womanly rights by incessant fighting with men. The milk of human kindness, maternal affection, unusual imaginative powers, and intelligence are part of her constitution and these are the tools with which, she says, women should make their presence felt as worthy human beings. Sachidanandan's statement, "The poems of Kamala Das are marked by a strain of spirituality which is beyond the body, sexuality or western feminism"¹⁰(29) suffices to

silence those critics who accuse her as a feminist who wants to make a topsy-turvy of the moral base of the society. Whether her writing can be characterized as female writing and what sort of feminism she advocates forms the central idea of chapter V. Chapter V also makes a study of her works with a view to looking for changes that might have come over her language over the years.

Notes

¹Schuchardt, Hugo. "On Sound Laws: Against the Neogrammarians." *Schuchardt, the Neogrammarians, and the Transformational Theory of Phonological Change*. ed. Theo Vennemann and Terence Wilbur. Frankfurt: Athenaeum, 1972. 39-72.

²പേരിന്റെ കാര്യത്തിൽ പോലും പ്രത്യേകതയുള്ള കഥാകാരിയാണ് മാധവിക്കുട്ടി. കമല, കമലാദാസ്, കമലാസുരയ്യ, സുരയ്യ, മാധവിക്കുട്ടി, ആമി. ഇത്രയേറെ പര്യായങ്ങളുള്ള ഒരേഴുത്തുകാരനോ, എഴുത്തുകാരിയോ വേറെ ഉണ്ടെന്ന് തോന്നുന്നില്ല. (മലയാളം വാരിക 28 ജൂലൈ 45).

³നാലപ്പാട്ടെ നെല്പാടങ്ങൾക്കപ്പുറം വന്നു നിന്നുകൊണ്ട് നെല്ലു തരാൻ ഉറക്കെ യുറക്കെ യാചിച്ചിരുന്ന നായാടിയെ എനിക്ക് ഓർമ്മ വന്നു. അവഗണന നാലപ്പാട്ടെ കുടുംബാംഗമായ ഞാൻ അർഹിക്കുന്നുവെന്നും എനിക്കുതോന്നി. (ഡയറിക്കുറിപ്പുകൾ 8).

⁴ജീവിതത്തിലുള്ള താത്പര്യം തന്നെയാണ് സാഹിത്യത്തിൽ ഔത്സുക്യത്തിന് നിദാനം. ഭാവനയിൽക്കൂടി പ്രതിഫലിച്ചുകാണുന്ന ജീവിതത്തിന് ആകർഷകത കൂടും. ചില സന്ദർഭങ്ങളിൽ ഏതെങ്കിലും മുഖത്ത് വന്നു വീഴുന്ന ഒരു വെയിൽ നാളം, അല്ലെങ്കിൽ പെട്ടെന്നു കേൾക്കുന്ന ഒരു പൊട്ടിച്ചിരി - ഇങ്ങനെ പലതും ഞാൻ മനസ്സിൽ സൂക്ഷിച്ചു വെക്കുന്നുണ്ട്.. ചിലപ്പോൾ ഉച്ചയ്ക്ക് ഉറങ്ങാൻ കിടക്കുമ്പോഴോ മറ്റോ, അവ ഓരോന്നും എടുത്തു പരിശോധിക്കും. അപ്പോൾ ചില കഥാ

പാത്രങ്ങൾ ആ മുറിയിൽ ജനിക്കുന്നു. 'എന്നെപ്പറ്റി എഴുതൂ' എന്നു പറയുന്നു. . . .
(മാധവിക്കുട്ടിയുടെ കഥകൾ 10).

⁵ലോകപ്രശസ്ത കവയത്രിയായ കമലാദാസ് എന്ന് മാധവിക്കുട്ടി മലയാളത്തിന്റെ പ്രിയ കഥാകാരിയാണ്. സ്നേഹത്തിന്റെ മണവും സൗന്ദര്യവുമുള്ള സുതാര്യമായ ഭാഷയാണ് ഈ എഴുത്തുകാരിയുടെ കൈമുതൽ. വികാരങ്ങൾക്കും സദാചാര ബോധത്തിനും മനുഷ്യസത്തയ്ക്കും ആധുനിക ജീവിതത്തിൽ സംഭവിച്ച വന്ധ്യത, മനസ്സും ഭാഷയും തമ്മിലുള്ള സംഘർഷം ഇതൊക്കെ കഥാകാരിയായ മാധവിക്കുട്ടിയുടെ ചേതനയെ ആവേശിച്ച പ്രശ്നങ്ങളാണ്. (പ്രസാധകക്കുറിപ്പ് മാധവിക്കുട്ടിയുടെ കഥകൾ)

⁶ഞാൻ സത്യത്തെ അന്വേഷിക്കുന്നവളായിരിക്കും, പക്ഷേ, ഏത്രയോ ലാഘവത്തോടെ ഞാൻ നുണ പറയുകയും ചെയ്യും. നുണ പറയുമ്പോൾ എനിക്ക് യാതൊരു അപരാധബോധവും അനുഭവപ്പെടാറില്ല. മറ്റുള്ളവരെ ചിരിപ്പിക്കണമെന്ന ഉദ്ദേശ്യത്തോടെ ഞാൻ നുണ പറയൽ എന്ന കളി കളിക്കുന്നു. മറ്റുള്ളവരെപ്പറ്റി നുണ പറയുന്നത് ഒരു ക്രൂര വിനോദമാണെന്ന് ബാല്യകാലത്തുതന്നെ പഠിച്ചിരിക്കയാൽ എന്നെപ്പറ്റി മാത്രമേ ഞാൻ നുണകൾ പറയാറുള്ളൂ. (അവതാരിക ഡയറിക്കുറിപ്പുകൾ).

⁷മാധവിക്കുട്ടി എന്നും ഒരു കലാപകാരിയായിരുന്നു. എന്റെ കഥയിൽ മാത്രമല്ല, എല്ലാക്കഥകളിലും അവർ കലാപം കുട്ടി. പൊയ്മുഖങ്ങൾക്കും മുഖം മുടി കൾക്കും, നുണകൾക്കും എതിരെ അവർ കലാപം കുട്ടി. സമ്പന്നന്റെ സംസ്കാര ശൂന്യതയോടും സംസ്കാരത്തിന്റെ പൊള്ളത്തരത്തോടും ജ്ഞാനിയുടെ സ്നേഹ

ശൂന്യമായ അച്ചടക്കത്തോടും എന്തിന്, മനുഷ്യാവസ്ഥയോടും വിധിയോടും തന്നെ അവർ കലഹിച്ചു (കളർകോട് വാസുദേവൻ നായർ മാധവിക്കുട്ടിയുടെ കഥകൾ 9).

⁸കഥ പറയുന്നശീലം, അല്ലെങ്കിൽ എല്ലാ സാഹിത്യത്തിന്റെയും അടിത്തറയായ 'സ്റ്റോറി ടെല്ലിംഗ്' ആണ് ഒരേഴുത്തുകാരി എന്ന നിലയ്ക്കു മാധവിക്കുട്ടിയെ പൂർണ്ണതയിലെത്തിക്കുന്നത്. തനിക്കു ചുറ്റുമുള്ള മനുഷ്യരൊക്കെ കഥാപാത്രങ്ങളായി മാറുന്ന, സംഭവങ്ങളൊക്കെ കഥകളായി പരിണമിക്കുന്ന, ജീവിക്കുന്ന ലോകം തന്നെ ഒരു വലിയ നോവലായി മാറുന്ന യഥാർത്ഥ സർഗ്ഗപ്രതിഭയുടെ മാനസികാവസ്ഥ (വി. ആർ. സുധീഷ് മാധവിക്കുട്ടിയുടെ പ്രേമകഥകൾ 13).

⁹ഞങ്ങളുടെ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ പശ്ചാത്തലം സൃഷ്ടിച്ചിരുന്നവരും അരങ്ങിന്റെ താങ്ങുകളുമായിരുന്ന വേലക്കാരെ ഞാനൊരിക്കലും മറക്കുകയില്ല. നാടകം തുടങ്ങുന്നതിനുമുമ്പ്, ചുലുമായി വന്ന് അരങ്ങു വൃത്തിയാക്കുന്നവരായിരുന്നു അവർ. അവർ പൊയ്ക്കഴിഞ്ഞാൽ മുഖ്യവേഷങ്ങൾ പുറത്തേക്കു വരികയായി. ഏറ്റവും ആദ്യത്തെ ഭൂതരിൽ ഒന്നാമനായും അവിസ്മരണീയനായും നിലകൊള്ളുന്ന ഛബിലാൽ മുഷിഞ്ഞ ധോത്തിയും കേടുവന്ന പല്ലുകളുമുള്ള ഒരു ഒരിയക്കാരനായിരുന്നു. ചുവന്ന കല്ലുവെച്ച തെക്കൻ താലി കഴുത്തിൽ കെട്ടിയ ഒരു വൃദ്ധ, തേഞ്ഞ പല്ലുകളുള്ള ത്രിപുര, മൂക്കുത്തിയിട്ട പാറുക്കുട്ടി, ഞാൻ നടക്കാനിറങ്ങുമ്പോൾ പച്ചപ്പാവാടയും ധരിച്ച് എന്റെ പിന്നിൽ പറന്നു കളിച്ചിരുന്ന ജാനകി, ഇവരൊക്കെ ഏതേതു യവനികകൾക്കു പിന്നിൽ പോയി മറഞ്ഞുവെന്ന് എനിക്കറിയില്ല (എന്റെ കഥ 15-19).

¹⁰ കമലാദാസിന്റെ കവിതകൾക്ക് പാശ്ചാത്യ ഫെമിനിസത്തിന്റെ പിടിയിലൊതുങ്ങാത്ത, ശരീരത്തിനും ലൈംഗികതയ്ക്കുമപ്പുറം പോകുന്ന ഒരാത്മീയതയുണ്ട്. (സ്ത്രീ, സ്വത്വം, സമൂഹം, മാധവിക്കുട്ടി പഠനങ്ങൾ 29).

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Sociolinguistics - Origins and Growth

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Chapter II

Sociolinguistics – Origins and Growth

If 'eternal vigilance' was once the slogan of a puristic and prescriptively minded linguistic age, the linguistic slogan of the new century should be 'eternal tolerance'.

David Crystal

Chapter I has briefly introduced the major topics to be elaborated in the subsequent chapters. The introductory chapter presents language study as a topic of great importance and sociolinguistics as an essential part of it. Chapter I also introduces Madhavikkutty as a versatile writer known worldwide and examines how sociolinguistics becomes relevant in the study of her works. Since sociolinguistic study is the theoretical basis of this research paper, it is essential to have a look at its origins, development and present position before going in to a detailed study of the author concerned.

Language is an unavoidable reality of the world and plays a significant role in human life. But the fact remains that many people still consider the study of language as superfluous and an area that does not deserve much attention. As Leonard Bloomfield says, "Perhaps because of its familiarity, we rarely observe it, taking it rather for granted, as we do breathing or walking. The effects of language are remarkable, and include much of what distinguishes man from the animals"(3).

Language is very intimately tied up with society; it gets reduced to a set of mere linguistic items such as sounds, words and grammatical structures when excluded from the social contexts in which it is used. The growing awareness of the interrelationship between language and society has led to the growth of the discipline known as 'sociolinguistics'. A study of language and its speakers undertaken simultaneously may be said to constitute the field of study of Sociolinguistics. An individual may not consistently use one homogeneous language variety for verbal communication on all occasions. He may be using more than one variety. The varieties of language he uses are determined by socio-cultural factors. Sociolinguistics thus studies the verbal behaviour of the individual who is a member of a speech community.

According to Florian Coulmas:

Sociolinguistics is the empirical study of how language is used in a society. Combining linguistic and sociological theories and methods, it is an interdisciplinary field of research, which attaches great significance both to the variability of language and to the multiplicity of languages, and language forms in a given society. (Sociolinguistics 563)

Generally people assess others not only from the factual content of what they say or write but also from the way they use language. What causes

people to resort to the way they use language and what distinguishes one person's style from another's are some very complex problems dealt with in sociolinguistics. The close interrelationship between language and culture or linguistic structure and social structure can very well be illustrated with the example of a boy whose linguistic utterances vary with the listener and the social context although he may be expressing the same idea. The boy tells his peers, 'Come along with me'. But he does not use the same linguistic structure if the addressee is his father. He uses the more polite form, 'Father, please come along with me'. The boy resorts to the much more formal and polite usage, 'Sir could you please come along with me', when the addressee is someone socially superior to him and a social distance exists between them.

How individuals differ from one another in the way they speak and what contributes to such differences form a very interesting topic of study. Some of the differences in speech may be personal, but beyond that there are differences associated with class or group, gender, context and many such factors. Men differ from women in their pitch and also in the way they use language. Similarly an adult never speaks like a child. These two are biologically determined differences of language use. Other than these two there are dimensions of social variation in language determined by other factors. Differences in social prestige, education, wealth and power do exercise great influence on the mode of speech. In the words of Gregory R. Guy:

Bankers clearly do not talk the same as bus boys, and professors don't sound like plumbers. They signal the social differences between them by features of their phonology, grammar and lexical choice, just as they do extra-linguistically by their choices in clothing, cars, and so on. (37)

As commented by Peter Trudgill:

[---], language is very much a social phenomenon. A study of language totally without reference to its social context inevitably leads to the omission of some of the more complex and interesting aspects of language and to the loss of opportunities for further theoretical progress. One of the main factors that have led to the growth of sociolinguistic research has been the recognition of the importance of the fact that language is a very variable phenomenon, and that this variability may have as much to do with society as with language. (... Language and Society 20)

The scope of sociolinguistics has widened further. Some of the areas covered under sociolinguistics are: speech variation and social stratification, social roles of different languages co-existing in a speech community, language planning, development and spread of lingua franca, language acculturation, language and socialisation, occupations and language

distribution, language judgment and evaluation, bilingualism/multilingualism, standardisation of language, and dialect studies.

Dialect Studies

It is in the twentieth century that sociolinguistics rose to the status of an independent discipline; but it is seen that systematic investigation of human speech began with the nineteenth century itself. Even from the end of the eighteenth century, taking inspiration from Jean Jacques Rousseau, many scholars and literary figures began to evince much interest in the study of native dialect and soon they were joined by the linguists who were eager to show that dialects as well as literary languages had respectable pedigrees. A literary event that gave a fillip to this movement was the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* in the year 1798. It contained poems very much different from those that had appeared in English language till then. In the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* Wordsworth, the author criticized the artificial diction of the poems written in the eighteenth century and recommended that poetry should be written in the real language of men. In fact he provided the impetus to make the language of poetry, especially dialogue to take account of contemporary speech and to make the speech of its characters less artificial. The principal characters dealt with in poetry till then had been members of the sophisticated classes and the urbanites. But Wordsworth's interest deviated from such people and concentrated on the rustics who lived in close

communion with nature. For him, real people included ordinary people from the country, children and members of classes other than the sophisticated urbanites. In this way Wordsworth signalled the break with the Augustan period and the onset of Romanticism which focused attention on the spirit of the folk in language, particularly as represented in dialect.

Madhavikkutty is one such writer who believes that the ordinary people, the underprivileged ones, and those looked upon by the society as low class have their lot to play in society. She has no hesitation in saying that in any big city, it is such people, their ways of living, their dialect and the like which caught her attention more than the sophisticated people. In her younger days her father used to say: “You are always with the servants. Now you talk just like them. Cheap low class talk”¹(NPK196).

Madhavikkutty devotes pages for the sake of exposing the every interesting discussions that took place in the back yard and kitchen of her ancestral home of Nalappat. The servants made a deep impression upon the mind of the author who was a young girl at that time. She believed that in their absence life lost its lustre. Any trivial topic would be discussed at length and very often the discussion digressed, taking on personal undertones and sometimes ending in acrimony and discord. It is very interesting to observe one such instance where Kamala is a passive listener and others present on the scene take active participation in the discussion.

In the novel *NPK*, ammamma tells herself that Kamala is quite weak and thin and she should be fed on the proper diet so that she gains weight before she leaves for Calcutta. All the members present there put forward their own suggestions as the young girl Kamala sits immersed in the verbal fight that follows.

“Let her eat some sesame on empty stomach and drink water. This will yield results in just one week.” Kali Narayanan Nair said.²

“This child won’t eat such things. Let her eat two black gram vadas* every night before retiring to bed and drink some milk. That’s enough. She will grow fair and fat and you will not even recognize her”, Madhaviamma said.

“You look as though you have eaten a lot of black gram vadas...”, Kali Narayanan Nair said.

“Do you mean that my body is fat? You have not seen fat people then. Have you seen kapraserry Kammal?” Madhaviamma asked.

“Your curse will destroy me, oh my Kannengal Goddess...” Madhaviamma said excitedly.

“Without curses your body will not trim down, Amral”, Valli, wife of Mambully Krishnan said.

* A popular snack in Kerala, round in shape, made of black gram by grinding it into paste and deep frying.

As Valli joins the talk, it takes on a new turn- they begin to mention by name all the slim people and fat people they know in the locality. Kali Narayanan Nair's statement that he is concerned only about the 'nair' community and the 'ambalavasis'* provokes Valli to argue that his community is not the highest. There are other communities higher than his, she comments. This leads to a dispute over the superiority of castes and more interesting talks follow. In fact subtle differences can be observed in the vocabulary of the different participants of such informal gatherings where a variety of topics were discussed and of which Madhavikkutty comments thus: "The kitchen and the surroundings of Nalappat house were always lively with such quarrels. Especially after amamma went upstairs for her afternoon siesta, sitting on the steps on the northern side, I used to listen to their words"³(79-80).

The use of common man's language and different dialects forms an essential feature of Kamala Das's Malayalam works. In this respect she stands at par with writers like Wordsworth who were to a large extent instrumental in directing the attention of the academia towards the study of dialects in the nineteenth century.

It is very interesting to have a quick glance of how dialect studies of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century have given way to

* Some other castes like the 'varrier', 'marar' etc who carry on hereditary work in the temples and treated as higher caste similar to the nair community

sociolinguistics of the present. Present day sociolinguistics is often referred to as urban dialectology, quantitative sociolinguistics etc because it forms a major part of sociolinguistics although it includes other topics as well. The dialectologists of the previous years concentrated mainly on collecting facts about geographically distributed and mostly rural varieties of language. Their goal was mainly tracing the development of modern languages from earlier varieties. Practitioners of urban dialectology, on the other hand, have been trying to analyze the features of urban varieties with a view to correlating them with social factors. They conceive of their work as one of the several ways of doing linguistics. In the words of Trudgill, modern research on the subject:

[...] is concerned to learn more about language, and to investigate topics such as the mechanisms of linguistic change, the nature of linguistic variability, and the structure of linguistic systems. All work in this category is aimed ultimately at improving linguistic theory and at developing our understanding of the nature of language[---]. (... *Patterns*...11)

The work done by dialectologists served to assert the social significance of language; but apart from that not much work proceeded in this direction. It took some more time before the subject grew out of its infancy and developed in to a fully-fledged discipline.

Most of the development in sociolinguistics has taken place since the late 1960s. In the recent decades there has sprung up a widespread interest in the subject owing to the realization that sociolinguistics can throw much light on the nature of language and the nature of society. The discipline is developing along new lines and it is concerned more with the study of languages of urban societies. Thus many of the old concepts have been redefined in tune with the changing language scenario.

Many of the nineteenth century linguists were chiefly concerned with the documentation of historical processes leading to the evolution of languages and they differed in the source materials they made use of in their studies. One group of linguists made use of manuscript remains of extinct languages or literary texts, inscriptions or documents throwing light on the earlier stages of modern literary languages. Their method of tracing the development of modern languages from earlier prehistoric varieties of protolanguages was very much similar to the method adopted by biological scientists in studying the evolution of animal organisms.

A second group of linguists took up the direct study of oral practices of peasant communities and tribal societies who, according to them, provided living proof of evolutionary processes. They turned away from written documents for the empirical investigation of actual speech. Dialectologists oriented in this direction launched in to a series of field surveys in which

peasant speech was studied either through mail questionnaires or directly through fieldwork by investigators who often covered many miles on foot in order to collect dialect samples through direct methods.

These methods of investigation had many limitations; but they served to demonstrate that language is basically a social institution and that social factors are very important in language change, thus disproving earlier ideas of biological or geographical determinism.

In the words of Winfred P. Lehmann:

One of the contributions of dialect geography to the present lies in making us aware of the great variety in language. Through the diversity and wealth of forms it has disclosed, dialect geography has broadened greatly our views of language. Historical grammars no longer treat languages as single strata, but rather as complexes composed of numerous data. A given speaker masters some of these. But the complete language is discernible only as one collects material from a variety of speakers. (126-7)

Lehmann adds:

But even the early dialect geographers went on to explore the geographically varying strata of language. Subsequent study

aroused concern for strata determined also by social, functional and occupational differences. In this way a view of language more complex than that of the founders of historical linguistics has been contributed to historical linguistics by the study of dialect geography. Contemporary study of language variation according to geographical, occupational, and social groups is carried out in the field of sociolinguistics. (127)

Thus, it can be seen that the mapping of dialects based on regional variation has been traditionally known as dialect geography and it has employed many assumptions and methods from another branch of linguistics known as historical linguistics. According to dialect geographers, the dialects of a language are created as the speakers distance themselves from one another over time and space. In course of time, the differentiation of a language in to dialects reaches such an extent that the speakers are no longer intelligible to one another; this results in the origin of new languages from the dialects. This is how, Latin, over a long period of time developed into many languages like French, Spanish, and Italian. This kind of differentiation takes in to account only the two factors, time and space. The British and American varieties or dialects of English are separated by a few centuries of political independence and by the Atlantic Ocean. Similarly Northumbrian and Cockney English are set apart by nearly three hundred miles and many centuries.

Traditionally dialect geographers attempted to mark their findings on *dialect atlases*. The geographical boundaries of the distribution of a particular linguistic feature was shown by a line on the map known as *isogloss*. On either side of the isogloss, different pronunciations of a certain word are used for e.g., if *bath* is pronounced with the first vowel sound of *father* on one side, it is said with the first vowel sound of *cat* on the other side. When different linguistic features are mapped in this way, sometimes the isoglosses crisscross, producing a *bundle of isoglosses* at certain points. Such a bundle is often said to mark a *dialect boundary*. One such bundle crosses the south of France from east to west (Grenoble to Bordeaux) with words like *chandelle*, *chanter*, and *chaud* beginning with a *sh* sound to the north and a *k* sound to the south.

Quite often it is seen that the dialect boundary coincides with some geographical or political factor, e.g., a mountain ridge, a river, or the boundary of an old principality or diocese. Isoglosses also show that a particular set of linguistic features appears to be spreading from one location, a *focal area*, into neighbouring areas. Places like London and Boston are obviously focal areas whereas Devon the extreme south west of England is a relic area as it shows characteristics of being unaffected by changes occurring in the neighbouring areas.

In America, from the early decades of the twentieth century, until the emergence of Chomsky's generative grammar, mainstream linguistics was chiefly concerned with the rapid and efficient description of a large number of dying native American languages. The descriptive linguist saw language as an entity existing outside the realm of the social structure. The descriptive study of a language provided information based on its structure stated largely in terms of linguistic units. In such structural description, the speaker, the listener, the theme, and the broader contexts of its use were not regarded relevant for structural description. Use of different styles of speech in case of a monolingual and use of different language varieties and styles in case of multilingual was not considered something to be noticed by a linguist. The descriptive linguist was satisfied with preparing an account of the language variety an individual spoke; it was none of his concern as to why an individual spoke different speech styles or language varieties. It did not occur to the linguist that use of a language or different registers or styles of it formed a system, which could be disentangled via the social structure. The study of meaning was also excluded from the scope of linguistics.

The second half of the twentieth century is marked by a renewed interest in the study of language in its socio-cultural context sparked off by a controversy over Chomskyan principles related to the autonomy of language. Chomskyan linguistics was built on the *autonomy of the syntax* and it had the *competence-performance* dichotomy as one of its strong pillars. Beatriz R.

Lavandera in her essay, “The Study of Language in its Socio-cultural Context” assesses the situation thus: “It does not seem far-fetched to hold Chomsky indirectly responsible for the accelerated development of sociolinguistics and ethnolinguistics at the end of the 1960 and for the emphasis laid upon pragmatics and discourse analysis in the mid 1970” (1).

Dichotomies like *langue-parole* and *competence-performance* as formulated by De Saussure and Noam Chomsky respectively, need a little more elaboration, as they are crucial in understanding how descriptive linguistics gradually paved the way for ‘socially realistic linguistics’ (Labov The Linguistic Variable... 14). Throughout the ages linguists have been in search of the idealized, pure form of language amidst the wide variety used by individuals. De Saussure, the Swiss linguist believed that the pure, homogeneous system of language existed in the ‘collective mind’ of the community and for Chomsky it was more abstract – it existed in the mind of the ideal speaker-hearer. Chomsky rejects Saussure’s ideas of *langue* as a body of material or an inventory of ideas from which the individual speaker selects his *parole*. Instead Chomsky sees language as consisting of the speaker, or hearer’s innate knowledge of his language (*competence*) and his actual use of language in concrete situations (*performance*).

According to Chomsky, *competence* is an underlying generative process, which will find ever more possible acts of *performance*. Although

very little is really known of the process and how it is achieved, the example of the five-year-old producing sentences he has not heard before suggests the possibility of an internal grammar, which permits the formation of new material. In the words of Basil Bernstein:

Chomsky neatly severs the study of the rule system of language from the study of the social rules, which determine their contextual use. He does this by making a distinction between *competence* and *performance*. *Competence* refers to the child's tacit understanding of the rule system, performance relates to the essential social use to which the rule system is put. *Competence* refers to man abstracted from contextual constraints. *Performance* refers to man in the grip of the contextual constraints, which determine his speech acts. (160)

Saussure, who first called language as a 'social fact', meant that every language is a social product and that every society constitutes itself through language. But Saussure never bothered to study the social side of language; on the other hand he was interested in studying language as a structural entity with its own laws.

Saussurean concept was that *parole* or language in use by different individuals was too varied to permit study and only *langue* could be studied. But operational difficulty arose when descriptive linguists began to study

langue because *langue* was not available to direct observation by the senses. *Langue* was stored in the 'collective consciousness' of the speech community and what could be observed was the *parole* only. An empirical approach meant direct observation of language in actual use and so a strict application of Saussure's dictum became an impossibility for the descriptive linguist who found *parole*, *performance*, or *speech* or *usage* too variable to be described. The sociologists who studied language as part of society and culture were chiefly concerned with language in actual use and so they fell apart from any theory or study that did not give due importance to *parole* or *performance*. Lavandera comments upon the situation thus:

The reaction to Chomsky's position that the systematicity of language is confined to competence took a number of different forms. Some, seeing systematicity outside of competence in Chomsky's narrow use of the term, attempted to extend the notion of competence to cover most of the aspects that Chomsky ascribed to performance. An example is Hymes's 'communicative competence' (Models...) which he defined as the knowledge of the abstract rules of a language required to produce sound / meaning correspondences and the ability to use those correspondences between sound, meaning and form in socially and culturally appropriate ways. On the other hand some saw system in performance as well and began to develop

theories specifically of the former. But whichever path was taken, a growing core of investigators was united in the conviction that the Chomskyan paradigm was too narrow to accommodate most of the interesting questions about language.

(1)

Many linguists of the period came forward with the argument that an 'asocial' linguistics is not worthwhile and that meaningful insights in to language can be gained only if such matters as use and variation are included as part of the data which must be explained in an adequate linguistic theory; an adequate theory of language must have something to say about the uses of language. A recognition of linguistic variation implies that language is not just an abstract object of study. It is something that people use for all sorts of communicative purposes. Thus there arose new ways of studying language based on its use and not as a mere object.

Some of the leading figures that contributed to the growth of socio linguistics as a discipline in its own right are: Edward Sapir, Benjamin Lee Whorf, Leonard Bloomfield, Malinowsky and J.R. Firth. Edward Sapir is perhaps the first linguist of the century to state that man's view of his environment is conditioned by the native language he uses. Sapir's views on language were corroborated by Benjamin Lee Whorf, whose comparative study of European languages and the American Indian language Hopi

provided him with sufficient material in support of his views. The hypothesis, frequently referred to as the 'Sapir-Whorf hypothesis' argues that speakers' native languages set up series of categories which act as a kind of grid through which they perceive the world, and constrain the way in which they categorize and conceptualize different phenomena. A language can affect a society by influencing or even controlling the worldview of its speakers. But this view about language has been very much disputed; less controversial is the relationship that operates in the opposite direction—the effect of society on language. In fact there are two aspects of the hypothesis, which have been widely discussed: one is 'linguistic determinism' and the other 'linguistic relativity'. Linguistic determinism views language as determining man's knowledge and understanding. This means that human beings cannot imagine a kind of knowledge, which is not encoded in their language. Linguistic relativity proposes that different speakers experience the world differently in so far as the languages they speak differ structurally. All observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar (Jane H. Hill¹⁵). This is how Whorf expressed his view on the relationship between language and thought:

[---] the background linguistic system (in other words the grammar) of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the programme and guide for the individual's mental

activity, for his analysis of impressions, for his synthesis of his mental stock in trade. Formulation of ideas is not an independent process, strictly rational in the old sense, but is part of a particular grammar and differs, from slightly to greatly, between different grammars. We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native language. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds – and this means largely by the linguistic system in our minds [...]. We are thus introduced to a new principle of relativity, which holds that all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar, or can in some way be calibrated. (26)

Whorf here talks about how our thinking is affected by the grammar of our language. The effect of vocabulary on thought is perhaps more obvious; but it is difficult to accept the claim of Sapir and Whorf that linguistic experience is the only kind of experience that influences our thought processes. The phrase ‘linguistic determinism’ as framed by Sapir and Whorf implies that our language provides the only framework of ideas within which we can think. Many have disputed this view arguing that there are many

concepts independent of language just as those we learned as babies before we started to speak towards the end of the first year of life. The Whorfian hypothesis still remains unproved and attempts to relate language structure and man's thinking or views of the world have not been successful so far.

Sarah Joseph, a very well known woman writer of Kerala, emphasizes the relationship between language and culture thus:

When a new word enters in to a language, it will infuse a new culture and life-style in to that society. These changes may not always be positive. For example, the introduction of the word 'kanyadanam' in to Malayalam brought about far-reaching changes in the marital relations in Kerala where a more liberal 'sambandam' form of man-woman relation was prevailing. At the level of language this was part of growing domination of Sanskrit over Malayalam, but it was also demonstrative of invasion of the male-dominated Brahminical culture on Kerala (The Hindu 15 November 2005).

'Sambandam' practised in Kerala was a sort of marital relationship in which it was more of a contract between the husband and the wife and it was more liberal in nature. But in the concept of 'kanyadanam' her father is gifting the woman to the man and she is not equal in status to the husband. The 'sambandam' form of relationship as practised by the nair community of

Kerala that followed the matrilineal family system had as its basis mutual understanding and its spirit was a very positive one without any traces of compulsion on either side. But the Brahmin culture that followed patriarchy insisted on denying the basic rights to women. Sarah Joseph sees it as invasion of brahminical culture upon Kerala in gradually wiping off 'sambandam' and introducing 'kanyadanam'.* wherein a girl is treated as a gift to man irrespective of her wish This is an example to show the mutual interference of language and culture. But it remains vague as to whether it is language that has influenced culture or the other way.

J.R.Firth, the linguist and Malinowsky, the anthropologist have contributed immensely towards the growth of sociolinguistics in Britain. Firth's claim was that he and his group studied language as part of the social process and that a 'key concept' to their technique was the concept of the '*context of situation*' formulated by Malinowsky. They saw meaning in terms of function in context and rejected all approaches to the study of language, which sought to exclude the study of meaning. The early communication theories had reduced languages to mere transmission of information whereas in the functionalist approach of linguists like Firth and Malinowsky, the *context of situation* is crucial and must include the participants in speech events, the action taking place and other relevant features. According to this view, a given language utterance is seen as appropriate to a certain use within

* 'Kanya' stands for virgin girl, 'daanam' means offer as a gift.

a certain cultural context; in a different linguistic and cultural setting, adjustments have to be made. Firth believed that this *context of situation* could be studied not as a vague, shifting background to a language event, but more vigorously in terms of related categories at a different level from grammatical categories but rather of the same abstract nature. He did not elaborate but did suggest that such categories could be:

- a) the relevant features of participants, persons and personalities.
 - 1) the verbal action of the participants.
 - 2) the non- verbal action of the participants.
- b) the relevant objects.
- c) the effect of the verbal action.

Leonard Bloomfield in his book *Language* discusses the topic of different speech communities and in it he clarifies our understanding of the mechanisms by which social factors affect language change. According to him linguistic diversity in human societies is directly related to density of communication or to the amount of verbal interaction among speakers. Previous scholars had attempted to find direct correlations between language and various environmental factors; but Bloomfield postulates an intervening level of human communication, which mediates between linguistic and non-linguistic phenomena. According to him political, economic and even geographical features are not directly reflected in speech. They affect

language only to the extent that they can be shown to channel verbal communication among speakers, causing certain individuals to have more verbal contact with some than with others and thereby influencing the rate at which innovations diffuse. Bloomfield writes:

Imagine a chart with a dot for every speaker in the community and imagine that every time any speaker uttered a sentence an arrow were drawn in to the chart printing from his dot to the dot representing each one of his hearers. At the end of a given period of time, say 70 years, that chart would show us the density of communication in the community...sub groups are separated by lines of weakness in this net of oral communication. (46-47)

All the linguists mentioned above contributed to the increasing importance of social factors in language and language study; but they could not initiate any movement in linguistics prompting the acceptance of linguistic variability as a very important factor. Even Sapir was not prepared to incorporate the element of variability in to his study of language. Sapir and the generation that came after him did not initiate any movement devoted to including the variability factor of language. Sapir who had come up with the epigrammatic conclusion, "Unfortunately or luckily, no grammar is tyrannically consistent. All grammars leak." (38) adopted in practice a very

strong form of the *axiom of categoricity*. J.K. Chambers defines the *axiom of categoricity* as “ the simplifying assumption that data for linguistic analysis must be regularized to eliminate real-world variability”(12).

When linguists observed the presence of variants in language they regarded them either as belonging to different coexistent linguistic systems or as unpredictably free substitutes. The variant forms used by people were never discussed or examined critically and were treated merely as random fluctuations. Those who believed in the notion of coexistent linguistic systems held the view that speakers maintained separate phonologies and grammar that gave them access to more than one code but switching over to the variants should not be sporadic. Alternating between the different codes should not, in principle, take place as long as the conditions surrounding the speech event remain unchanged. But, in effect, many speakers are observed to be switching over from one variant to another in the same sentence itself. Large group of people resort to this kind of variant mixing in similar circumstances. The linguistic behaviour of such people provides evidence for a single system in which variants coexist rather than the coexistence of different linguistic systems.

According to Coulmas, sociolinguistics has replaced categoricity with frequency, i.e. the frequency of occurrence of variant features of language use in a given speech community. He observes thus:

Instead of categorizing a certain pronunciation or a certain construction as either belonging to or not belonging to a language L, sociolinguistics would measure the frequencies with which such features and constructions occurred in variety X compared with variety Y. The fact that speech communities and individual speakers had a wide range of possible speech forms at their command was recognized as an essential rather than a haphazard condition of the social functioning of language. Discovering systematic patterns underlying the actual occurrences of variant speech forms and relating them to social characteristics of speakers and speech situations turned in to be the major challenge that sociolinguistics set out to confront. (Sociolinguistics 565)

J.K. Chambers takes up the example of variants like *car* and *automobile* to disprove the idea of free variation and to establish that variants are subject to the influence of social factors. Chambers observes thus:

The idea of free variation carries a strong implication as well. If the variants are truly free, that is, if the occurrence of one variant or another is arbitrary, then it must follow *a fortiori* that the variants cannot be predicted by any factor. Yet the most casual observations of speech show that its variants are

associated with social factors. Discussions of free variations routinely included observations that 'free' variants like *automobile* were used in advertisements because the word had a dignity lacking in its counterpart *car*. In other words, the variants were predictable, at least probabilistically, and not free in any meaningful sense of the word. (14)

Linguistic variables

R.A.Hudson defines a variable as a "collection of alternatives which have something in common"(169). A linguistic variable is a "linguistic unit with two or more variants involved in co variation with other social and / or linguistic variables" (Chambers&Trudgill60). A very commonly cited example is the use of alternative pronunciations for the suffix *-ing* which are represented as (ng): [ŋ] and (ng): [n].

Variables of this kind need to be examined in sociolinguistic terms because other kinds of explanations are irrelevant here. This fact becomes quite clear when we observe that the difference between the same two sounds at the end of *sing* and *sin* does not come under the area of sociolinguistics because they can be classified as lexical items. A person who is familiar with the meaning and use of these words knows very well why it is *sing* on one occasion and *sin* on another. So also, the choice between the words *sing* and *sings* comes under the rules of grammar. The social factor has absolutely no

relevance in the study of the choice of these sounds. Linguists explain these facts without looking at the social context or the social variables. So it has to be emphasized that linguistic variables that require a sociolinguistic explanation only can be called as ‘sociolinguistic variables.’

Hudson identifies different types of sociolinguistic variables based on the level of language (phonetics, phonology, morphology, lexicon, syntax) at which the variants are different.

1. **Phonetic variables**

Certain phonological patterns have different phonetic realizations. The English phoneme /t / has different pronunciations (glottal stop, an r-like flap, a d-like tap, alveolar stop, alveolar aspirate with an s-like ending and so on). All these count as pronunciations of the same phoneme.

Phonological variables

The same lexical item has alternative phonological structures in a good number of cases like the use of *house* and *happy* with or without h.

Morphological variables

In places like Norwich, it is very commonly observed that present-tense verbs are uttered with or without the suffix–s. Quite often the local form is *she sing*, but people who use this also use the standard form *she sings*.

Lexical variables

Sometimes, two or more lexical items express the same meaning or in other words, are partial synonyms. Compound pronouns like *nobody* and *somebody* have exactly the same meaning as the corresponding forms *none* and *someone*.

Syntactic variables

Different syntactic structures sometimes express the same meaning; but just like the lexical variables they also pose difficulty and quite often other disciplines might offer better explanations than sociolinguistics. Sometimes, it is possible that a complete explanation may involve a combination of sociolinguistics with other disciplines like psycholinguistics and discourse analysis. The content of a sentence like 'The criminal was apprehended by a policeman who happened to be passing at the time', could also be expressed as 'A policeman who happened to be passing at the time apprehended the criminal'. Here, the choice of the passive/active can be explained in different ways – The sociolinguist might view them from the point of view of differing styles, the passive being relatively formal. The psycholinguist might explain it in terms of the processing load or ease of comprehension arising out of the final position of the long phrase about the policeman. The discourse analyst has yet other comments to make; he might try to relate it to the writer's choice of the criminal as the topic, i.e. might give

importance to what the sentence is about. In fact, all the explanations given above are right in this case: considerations of style, of processing difficulty and of topicality all contribute to the choice of the passive. Although other explanations are quite relevant in cases like this, the sociolinguist can rightly treat such cases as sociolinguistic variables.

William Labov is the pioneer who systematically investigated speech and quantitatively treated speech data; but he was not the first person to study linguistic variables in a speech community. A very good work in the field had already been done by Louis Gauchat in a Swiss village at the beginning of the twentieth century and he noted down the clear differences between individual speakers and came out with figures on how many people used which variants. Since he could not collect continuous texts, he could not produce text based figures also.

Another study by Kindaichi broke new ground in the sense that it was done in a city (all traditional studies were done in rural areas) and it was designed so as to study the effect of sex and social class (two of the social parameters considered as most important in later work) on language. Kindaichi's study related to the use of the linguistic variable /g /as used in the middle of a word (for example, /kago/, 'card'). The traditional pronunciation is [ŋ], (like the / n/ in finger); but Kindaichi noticed that young people were replacing the [ŋ] by [g] and he set out to study the pronunciation of seventy

high school students of Tokyo by asking them to read a list of words while he noted their pronunciation. His study came up with the revelation that the change in the pronunciation was being led by middle class girls.

This was followed by two American studies: the first one was in a semi rural community in New England and it focused on how children pronounced the *ing* suffix in words like *talking*, whether they chose [n] or [ŋ]. The study undertaken by the leading British sociologist John L. Fischer was prompted by his accidental observation of glaring inconsistencies in the speech of the New England school children. In fact the sociologist Fischer began his work as part of a child-rearing project, but gradually he came to be more involved in the peculiarities of their speech. Their alternations between *running* and *runnin'* (pronouncing the participle differently on different occasions) led Fischer to study the matter more deeply; but the linguists of the period told him that it was merely “free variation”. Fischer did not feel satisfied by the explanation given by the linguists and he set out determined to correlate linguistic variation with social factors. Fischer’s research turned out to be successful to a very large extent and his correlation of language variants with independent variables like ‘social class’ and ‘sex’ proved that the notion of “free” variation is baseless. Fischer viewed the situation thus:

Free variation is of course a label, not an explanation. It does not tell us where the variants came from or why the speakers

use them in different proportions, but is rather a way of excluding such questions from the scope of immediate enquiry. Historically I presume that one could investigate the spread of one of these variants in to the territory of another through contact and migration, and this would constitute one useful sort of explanation. However another sort of explanation is possible in terms of current factors, which lead a given child in given circumstances to produce one of the variants rather than another. (47)

In Fischer's statement we find the most fundamental motive for sociolinguistics, and the basis for sociolinguistic analysis. Fischer's study revealed that [ŋ] was used more by girls than by boys, more by 'model' boys than by 'typical' boys and more in formal situations than in informal ones. The second study was in North Carolina and its focus was the use of [r] in words like *car* and *card*. The results showed the clear influence of social class on pronunciation; but it was complicated since it was found that high social status was linked to both the use of [r] and to its non-use. The results suggested the co-existence of two competing standards in the society. (Hudson 148-50)

In fact, the term 'sociolinguistics' had been coined long before any research had been taken up in the area of 'linguistic variation and social

correlates'. Haver. C. Currie, a poet and philosopher of the mid twentieth century observed that most of the linguists of the conventional schools had accepted the social function of language but none bothered to include it as a major research topic. Currie used the word 'socio-linguistics' to refer to the study of American English undertaken by Mencken in his popular work *The American Language*. Currie praised Mencken for his commendable work in the area of socio-linguistics i.e. consideration of the social significance of English as spoken in the United States. The term sociolinguistics suggested by Currie had not been accepted immediately; but later when it came in to general use after about a decade or so nobody remembered him or gave him credit for the coinage. It was William Labov's study of the Lower East side of New York city looking for dialectal variation that persuaded other linguists to delve deep in to the field of sociolinguistic study and realize that the linguistic variable and the social structure are so intimately related.

Thus it is seen that as William Labov began his work in the island of Martha's Vineyard off the New England coast (1961), quantitative approach to speech had already begun. Labov took a step ahead by making use of the tape recorder to record continuous speech and it was of immense use in assessing how far consistent the speakers were in their speech. Most of Labov's work has been devoted to the study of living languages, especially that of colloquial English. This kind of work is quite often known as *Labovian sociolinguistics*. In this kind of work the sociolinguist focuses on a

predetermined list of *linguistic variables* – speech elements that have different realizations. Mostly they are words, which have more than one pronunciation. For each variable, there is a list of variants and the investigator approaches different people talking in similar circumstances.

Labov observed that many people pronounced the words *house* and *hit* with an initial [h], whereas many others never made use of it. Presumably they belong to different linguistic systems; but such an explanation can not be given in the case of speakers who sometimes use the [h] for *house* and *hit* and at other times do not. There are people who say (*I didn't eat any apples*) and some who say (*I didn't eat no apples*) and many people alternate between these two uses. The notation that is commonly used to represent these facts is given thus: Cases of the (h) variable where [h] is pronounced, is written as (h): [h]. If (h) variable is absent, it is written as (h): ∅ (∅) is the symbol normally used in linguistics to represent 'zero' or the absence of some element. Labov and others found that linguistic variation could not be easily related to social variables. Different variants of the same variable were quite often seen in the same text and based on it, texts could be arranged on a continuous scale. Labov's study revealed that (no/any): [no] constituted more than 80% of the cases. (... Inner City 181). Similarly social variables themselves were also found to be continuous rather than discrete – people are more or less wealthy, or manly or educated rather than falling in to clearly

discrete social groups. These factors called for a quantitative treatment of the data, using appropriate techniques.

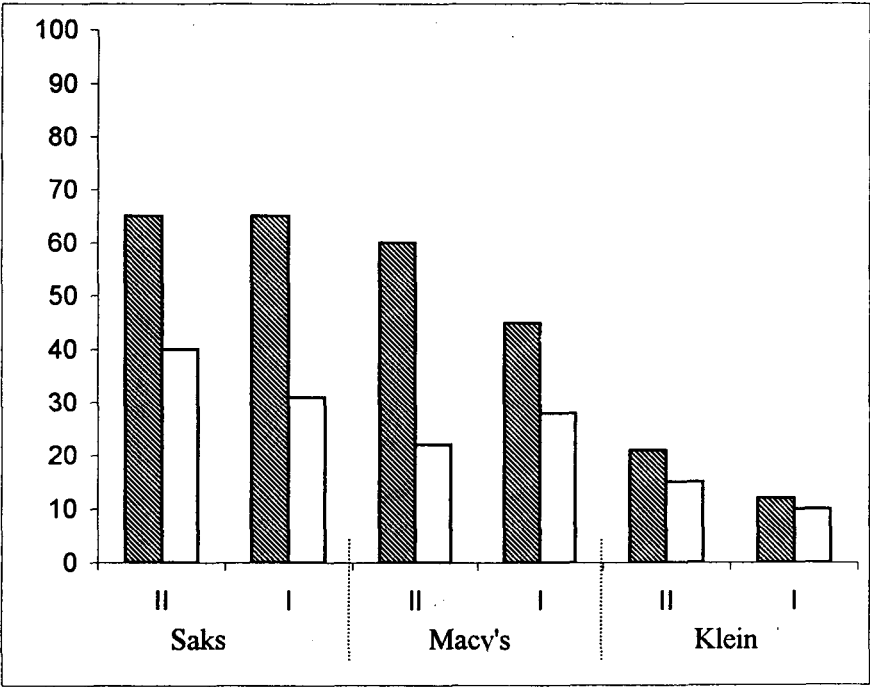
Labov's first work in Martha's Vineyard proved the existence of systematic differences between speakers in the use of certain linguistic variables. After this he worked with a very different community in New York, trying to test some hypotheses, which he had already formulated about the use of the linguistic variable (r). This work, which had already been done in North Carolina, concerned the presence or absence—(r): [r] versus (r):ϕ of the consonantal (r) sound in words like *farm* and *fair*, where the next sound is not a vowel in the same word. The New Yorkers were gradually shifting from the (r):ϕ to (r): [r] and Labov's prediction was that the proportion of (r):ϕ would be highest in the speech of older people.

Labov used a very simple method to collect data. He walked around three department stores in New York asking shop assistants where some goods were available. The three department stores – Saks, Macey's and S.Klein were clearly demarcated by the social class groups to which they catered (high, middle, and low respectively). In fact he knew that he could get them on the fourth floor. His aim was to observe how each assistant would utter the words 'fourth floor'. He would then lean forward and pretend not to have heard the answer thus making the assistant say it again. He selected the words *fourth* and *floor* because the (r) is followed by a consonant in *fourth* but

not in floor. By selecting these two words he could very well test the hypothesis about the influence of 'linguistic context'. By making them repeat the answer he could test the hypothesis about the amount of 'attention to speech' as the assistants would be more careful about the second utterance. He also wanted to study about the influence of 'age' by making a rough guess about the age of each assistant. Labov also could test the hypothesis about 'social status' by comparing the stores with each other as they served different categories of customers. Within each store he made distinctions among the assistants – between floorwalkers, sales staff and stock boys – and even between different floors within each store, as higher status goods are generally stocked on higher floors.

Labov noted down the relevant details of each assistant secretly after the meeting only, so that they never realized that they were being subjected to examination or that it was part of a research. This method proved to be highly effective and speedy also; Labov could collect relevant 'texts' from 264 subjects and identify the variants in just six and a half hours. As the figures were processed, most of the hypotheses of Labov were found to be true. As predicted by him the use of (r): [r] decreased from high status to low status store. Similarly, Labov also studied the influence of another factor i.e. attention to speech given by the participants. He noticed that careful repetition of the utterance nearly always increased the *r*-pronunciation and

pronunciation of the *r* was found more often in *floor* than in *fourth*. Regarding the element of the age factor, Labov reached the conclusion that members of the highest and lowest social groups tend not to change their pronunciation after it becomes fixed in adolescence but members of the middle social groups sometimes do it because of their desire to rise in social position. The results as formulated by Labov are represented diagrammatically as follows:



New York (r). Percentage of (r): [r] in first (I) and second (II) utterances of *fourth* (white) and *floor* (hatched) by assistants in three department stores (based on Labov 1972a: 52)

Another work done by Labov, in New York city, on the social stratification of English took him to the conclusion that the incidence of one or other of a set of alternating variables in a person's speech depends on either of two non-linguistic variables. 1) The person's position in the social hierarchy as defined by his income and education. 2) The formality of the speech situation defined by the degree to which the participants were made aware that they were participating as informants in a programme of linguistic survey and research.

Thus it can be seen that there have been two different approaches to the study of dialects – dialect geography and urban sociolinguistics. Dialect geography is also called as regional dialectology, area linguistics, linguistic geography and traditional dialectology. Dialect geography has been mainly concerned with collecting data for linguistic atlases, which are collections of maps, each showing the geographical distribution of some linguistic variant at the level of phonetics, phonology, morphology, lexicon or semantics. Describing the speech of elderly informants was an essential part of dialect geography because those linguists believed that such speech would throw light on the earlier varieties of languages. The approach of regional dialectology has been mainly diachronic; it is more concerned with looking for the stamp of the older 'standard language' in a dialect variety of the present or 'to focus on the forms themselves and their cognates rather than on the verbal habits of the speakers that use them. Present day sociolinguistics, with urban dialectology as one of its key areas, on the other hand has tended

to adopt a synchronic approach; it collects samples of language at some particular point in time and tries to correlate the linguistic variations with extra-linguistic criteria. It seeks to describe a language state rather than see it from the perspective of a changing system. Of course there have been a few dialectological studies without the historical bias; but most of the studies are historically oriented. Sociolinguistics differs from dialectology in another respect too. Dialectology treats dialects and languages as clear cut monolithic structures having certain linguistic features, between which there are dividing lines very similar to the ones seen on maps. Sociolinguistics is not inclined to study languages as existing independently and distinguishable from other languages. Its concern is the social group and the linguistic variables it uses seeking to correlate these variables with the traditional demographic units of the social sciences. Correlating linguistic variables with such units like age, sex, socio economic class membership, regional grouping and status of the language users is the focus of its study.

Variation of language forms the most basic tenet of sociolinguistics.

Language variation and social stratification forms one important area in sociolinguistics; some other topics like language planning, language birth and death, language and socialization, dialect study, bilingualism/multilingualism, etc need a mention in this context because they are topics that come under the ambit of sociolinguistics and gaining more and more attention. These topics have been introduced briefly in different chapters of

this thesis at suitable places. Although the topic 'language planning' has no direct relevance in the context of the sociolinguistic study of an author, considering its importance in the field of sociolinguistics it is briefly mentioned.

Language Planning

It is a matter of common knowledge that plenty of expressive choices are available to a speaker of language who wants to communicate with the people around him. The situation gets more complex if the speakers mix many varieties of a language or different languages because the choice of one language variety or another produces added meanings. Such choices serve to identify the speakers with some particular group, loyalty to a heritage language, or even reveal the attitude towards the interlocutor etc.

The selection of language alternatives carry a lot of social implications and so it is not a matter of surprise that efforts are made to influence the way in which language is used. The fact that alternatives exist makes language planning a possible and necessary thing. Alternatives of language are available at all levels of language use like every day communication, official communications and public functions. Planning has no relevance in casual or day-to-day communication between individuals; but it becomes extremely important while enacting legislation regarding the use of language at the official or national level or as a medium of education. In addition to filling the

communication needs, language can serve symbolic functions just as being a unifying or separatist force in a community. Thus political, social, and economic concerns become very important in language planning.

Language planning is an area with undefined boundaries. Some see all work committed to changes within a language as language planning. The present trend is to view the topic from a very wide perspective of language problems and correction in general. Even a speaker's mis-statement in a discourse, to the choice of official languages in a multilingual nation comes under the umbrella of language planning. According to Rubin, "language planning becomes one kind of language correction, done in a conscious, planned manner by groups authorized to carry out the change"⁴ (qtd.in Donna Christian 196). Donna Christian defines language planning thus: "language planning is an explicit and systematic effort to resolve language problems and achieve related goals through institutionally organized intervention in the use and usage of languages"(197). She tries to illustrate her point through clear-cut examples like the following: Prior to independence, India's population spoke a number of different native languages but English was the official language of the country. On getting independence, the Indian leaders did not like to retain English as the official language; they chose Hindi as the official language to underscore the new national identity. This kind of governmental

policy formulation of assigning official status to language is one form of language planning.

In Eastern Africa, many dialects of Swahili had been used for communication in the late nineteenth century. Britain, the colonial power recognized the position of the language and formulated an educational policy for its use. But Swahili had many different dialects and a commission was appointed to choose a dialect to standardize. The commission chose the Zanzibar dialect and ventured to promote its standardization. Such attempts were quite successful and more so in the written forms. Swahili later became an official language in many independent East African nations including Tanzania. Thus it is seen that language planning intervenes in the normal course of events to develop a standard form of the language. Donna Christian concludes her study of language planning thus:

Language planning, as an explicit effort to influence language use and usage, must respond to a variety of demands. The desired outcomes are most often political, social or even economic in character, and language is a means to these ends. [---]. However the fact that language planning is not primarily a linguistic activity does not mean that there is no role for linguists. A linguist who understands the socio-cultural context of language behaviour is in fact better informed to make

recommendations concerning the direction and implementation of changes that will lead to political or social outcomes than those who focus on the outcomes alone (208).

Micro sociolinguistics and Macro sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is a meeting ground for linguists and social scientists, some of whom seek to understand the social aspects of language while others are primarily concerned with the linguistic aspects of society. Thus, there have come up two centers of gravity, known respectively as micro- and macro- sociolinguistics. These represent different orientations and research agendas, micro issues being more likely to be investigated by linguists, dialectologists and others in language-centered fields, whereas macro issues are more frequently taken up by sociologists and social psychologists.

The general view regarding the distinction between micro-sociolinguistics or sociolinguistics and macro-sociolinguistics or sociology of language is this: Sociolinguistics is the study of language in relation to society whereas sociology of language is the study of society in relation to language. The difference between the two lies chiefly in the point of emphasis, whether the learner is interested more in language or society.

Ronald Wardhaugh distinguishes the two in the following words:

[---], sociolinguistics is concerned with investigating the relationships between language and society with the goal being a better understanding of the structure of language and of how languages function in communication; the equivalent goal in the sociology of language is trying to discover how social structure can be better understood through the study of language, e.g., how certain linguistic features serve to characterize particular social arrangement. (12).

Micro-sociolinguistics investigates how social structure influences the way people talk and how social attributes like class, gender and age are related to language varieties. Topics like language planning, language attitude, language birth, death or to put it shortly what societies do with their language comes within the area of micro-sociolinguistics.

Wardhaugh, although he accepts this sort of distinction, is of the view that it is not possible to make a sharp distinction between the two because they overlap at many levels. In his view rigid micro-macro compartmentalization seems quite contrived and unnecessary in the present state of knowledge about the complex interrelationships between linguistic and social structures.

Sociolinguistics has widened in to many areas; but this researcher has not dealt with all of them because they are very vast in content and has no

direct relevance in the context of the topic of the present work. Language Planning is one such area mentioned in this chapter and some other topics are also mentioned at various parts of the thesis.

Notes

¹“നീ എപ്പോഴും വേലക്കാരുടെ കൂടെയാ! അവരു സംസാരിക്കുന്നതുപോലെയാ നീയും സംസാരിക്കുന്നത്! ചീപ്പ് ലോക്സാൻ സംസാരം” അച്ഛൻ ഒരിക്കൽ എന്നോട് നീരസത്തോടെ പറഞ്ഞു. (നീർമാതളം പുത്തകാലം 196).

²“വെറും വയറ്റിൽ ഒരു പിടി കാരെള്ള തിന്നിട്ട് വെള്ളം കുടിച്ചാ മതി. ഒരാഴ്ച യോണ്ട് നല്ല ഫലം കാണും” കലി നാരായണൻ നായർ പറഞ്ഞു.

“അതൊന്നും ഈ കുട്ടി തിന്നില്ല. രാത്രി കെടക്കണേന്റെ നൂമ്പെ രണ്ട് ഉഴുന്നുവട തിന്നാ മതി. അത് തിന്നിട്ട് കൊറച്ച് പാല് കുടിക്കൂ. അത്രതന്നെ. കുട്ട്യ കണ്ടാ മനസ്സിലാവില്ല. നല്ലോണം വെളുത്ത് തടിക്കും”, മാധവിയമ്മ പറഞ്ഞു.

“ഇങ്ങള് കൊറെ ഉഴുന്നു വട തിന്നേന്റെ ലക്ഷണങ്ങളല്ലോ മാധ്യേമേ, . . . ” കലി നാരായണൻ നായർ പറഞ്ഞു.

“ഇന്റെ തടി ഒരുതടിയാ? ഇങ്ങള് ശെരിക്കും തടിച്ചിട്ടുള്ളൊരെ കണ്ടിട്ടാവില്ല. കപ്രശ്ശേരി കമ്മളെ കണ്ടിട്ടുണ്ടാ? മാധവിയമ്മ ചോദിച്ചു.

“നിങ്ങളെ പ്രാക്ക് കാരണം ഞാൻ കെടപ്പാവുലോ എന്റെ കണ്ണേങ്കലത്തെ ഭഗോതീ.” മാധവിയമ്മ ആവേശത്തോടെ പറഞ്ഞു.

“കൊറെ പ്രാക്ക് തട്ടിലെങ്കി ഇങ്ങളെ ശരീരം ഒന്ന് ഒടയില്ല അഥാളേ,” മാനുളളി കൃഷ്ണന്റെ ഭാര്യ വളളി പറഞ്ഞു.

³നാലപ്പാട്ടെ അടുകളെയും പരിസരവും സദാസമയത്തും ഇത്തരം കലഹങ്ങളാൽ സജീവമായിരുന്നു. പ്രത്യേകിച്ചും ഉച്ചയുറക്കത്തിനായി അമ്മമ്മ മുകളിലേക്കു പോയതിനു ശേഷം ഞാൻ വടക്കിനിയിൽ നിന്ന് പുറത്തേക്ക് നീണ്ട ചവിട്ടുപടികളിൽ ഇരുന്നുകൊണ്ട് അവരുടെ വാക്കുകൾ ശ്രദ്ധിക്കാറുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. (നീർമാതളം പുത്തകാലം 79-80).

⁴Rubin, J. Review of Language Planning: An Introduction. *Language in Society*, 14.1: 137-41.

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Certain Basic Sociolinguistic Concepts

Kamala. K. “The bard who sings of love and life...A Sociolinguistic Study of Kamala Das's Works ” Thesis. Department of English , University of Calicut, 2006

Chapter III

Certain Basic Sociolinguistic Concepts

The question 'What is Language?' still remains unanswered

Wall work J.F.

Chapter II assigns Sociolinguistics to its rightful place in the history of Linguistics. The recent developments in Linguistics have shown beyond doubt that any study of language has to take in to account the social aspects too. Chapter II looks at the topic of sociolinguistics in greater detail; its beginnings, its present relevance; the major theoreticians who are responsible for its growth and its development in various directions.

Some of the basic assumptions on which the whole edifice of sociolinguistics rests are very relevant in the study of the subject and need to be examined in detail. Sociolinguistics being 'the study of language in relation to society', it is essential that one becomes familiar with certain terms before taking up larger issues connected with the same.

Language

The term 'society' is easily defined as "any group of people who are drawn together for a certain purpose or purposes"(wardhaugh 1). As far as a layman is concerned, this definition suffices; but for the sociolinguist the extent and limits of this very comprehensive term varies with the context. The

term 'language' is even more complex; it encompasses a wide range of possibilities and its elusive nature is attracting more and more researchers in to its fold. A very simple definition in the sociologist's view is, "a language is what the members of a particular society speak" (Wardhaugh 1). 'Speech' or 'language' varies from person to person, from place to place and the very same individual is seen to talk differently in different contexts.

These terms, most fundamental to the study of sociolinguistics are found to be extremely problematic to sociolinguists for they are unable to define the terms or find criteria for delimiting the varieties.

Wardhaugh cites the example of census takers in India who find themselves confronted with a wide array of language names when they ask people what language or languages they speak. He observes:

Names are not only ascribed by region, which is what we might expect, but sometimes also by caste, religion, village and so on. Moreover they can change from census to census as the political and social climate of the country changes. (23)

Speakers as well as investigators find it difficult to decide whether variety X is a language, and variety Y is a dialect of language. There are people who view these terms light-heartedly and use the term 'language' to refer to the most common variety and 'dialect' to represent a local non-prestigious variety. But investigators do find themselves in real difficulty in

deciding whether one term should be used rather than the other in certain situations. Einar Haugen has pointed out that language and dialect are ambiguous terms. According to him, the terms 'represent a simple dichotomy in situations that is almost infinitely complex'. He points out that this is not a new development; the confusion regarding the distinction can be traced back to the Ancient Greeks (68) The Greek language used in Ancient Greece was actually a group of distinct local varieties (Ionic, Doric, Attic) descended from a common spoken source through divergence and each variety had its own literary traditions and uses, for example Ionic for history, Doric for choral and lyric works, and Attic for tragedy. Later, Athenian Greek, the Koine—or 'common' language – became the norm for the spoken language as the various spoken varieties converged on the dialect of the major cultural and administrative center. Haugen is of the view that the Greek situation has provided the model for all later usages of the two terms with the resulting ambiguity. Wardhaugh concludes the point thus: Language can be used to refer either to a single linguistic norm or to a group of related norms, and dialect to refer to one of the norms (23-24).

Coming to the French scenario the situation is even more complicated: the French distinguish between *un dialecte* and *un patois*. The first one is a regional variety of a language that has an associated literary tradition and the second term is used for a regional variety devoid of such a literary tradition. *Patois* is considered as something less than a dialect because there is no

literature associated with it. But it should also be mentioned that *dialect* in French, just as *Dialekt* in German cannot be used in connection with the standard language. A speaker of French will never say that standard French is a dialect of French.

The English situation is of course different; although there were times when dialects were not considered on the same level as standard language it is no more so. In the past, the term *dialect* in English had connotations of non-standard or sometimes even sub-standard; but nowadays it is quite commonly heard that standard English is a dialect of English.

Wardhaugh cites many examples of language situations in different countries which adequately explain why it becomes difficult to distinguish between the terms 'language' and 'dialect'. A speaker of the cockney variety of English (generally considered as a substandard variety of English) will find it very difficult to communicate with a native of the Ozark mountains in the United States, although both of them speak the same language, by common notions. But sheer observation of the two varieties spoken would lead anyone into thinking that they should be labelled under different names because they are so well markedly different from each other. Similarly, the question arises whether the French of Quebec is a dialect of standard French or whether it should be regarded as a separate language.

Wardhaugh represents the language situation in China thus:

If we turn our attention to China, we will find that speakers of Cantonese and Mandarin will tell you that they use the same language. However, if one speaker knows only Cantonese and the other only Mandarin, they will not be able to converse with each other: they actually speak different languages, certainly as different as German and Dutch and even Portuguese and Italian. If the speakers are literate, however, they will be able to communicate with each other through a shared writing system. They will almost certainly insist that they speak different *dialects* of Chinese, not different *languages* - for to the Chinese a shared writing system and a strong tradition of political, social and cultural unity form essential parts of their definition of *language*. (28)

Speech Community

The widest context of verbal interaction for sociolinguistic research is usually taken to be the speech community. The study of speech communities has interested linguists for a long time; there has always been a lot of disagreement over exactly what a speech community is. One of the definitions of 'speech community' given by John Lyons is as follows:

Speech community: all the people who use a given language (or dialect)(326).

According to this definition, speech communities may overlap (where there are bilingual individuals) and need not have any social or cultural unity. Hudson is of the view that it is possible to delimit speech communities in this sense only to the extent that it is possible to delimit languages and dialects without referring to the community that speaks them.

Charles Hockett defines a speech community as:

“Each language defines a speech community: the whole set of people who communicate with each other, either directly or indirectly, via the common language” (8).

In this definition, the condition of ‘communication within the community’ is added and so if two communities speak the same language but has no contact at all with each other they would be treated as two different speech communities

Leonard Bloomfield views a speech community thus:

"A speech community is a group of people who interact by means of speech" (42).

Such a definition hints at the possibility that the group need not be entirely of people who speak the same language. Some may speak one language and others another language. The definition given by John Gumperz also recognizes such a possibility:

We will define [linguistic community] as a social group which may be either monolingual or multilingual, held together by frequency of social interaction patterns and set off from the surrounding areas by weaknesses in the lines of communication.(28)

Another definition given by Gumperz later, requires that there should be some linguistic differences between the members of the speech community and those outside it:

The speech community: any human aggregate characterised by regular and frequent interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs and set off from similar aggregates by significant differences in language use. (381)

In these two definitions the emphasis is on communication and interaction and so the question of overlapping of speech communities does not arise much. In the earlier definitions, overlap automatically results from bilingualism.

William Labov has given a different definition of the term, putting the emphasis on shared attitudes and knowledge, rather than on linguistic behaviour:

The speech community is not defined by any marked agreement in the use of language elements, so much as by participation in a

set of shared norms: these norms may be observed in overt types of evaluative behaviour, and by the uniformity of abstract patterns of variation, which are invariant in respect to particular levels of usage. (120)

Dell Hymes and Michael Halliday also have given similar definitions referring to shared norms and abstract patterns of variation rather than to shared speech behaviour. This sort of definition puts emphasis on the speech community as a group of people who feel themselves to be a community in some sense, rather than a group, which only the linguist could know about.

Robert Le Page takes a totally different approach which avoids the term 'speech community' altogether and instead refers to groups in society which have distinctive speech characteristics as well as other social characteristics. According to him the groups are those, which the individual speaker perceives to exist, and not necessarily those, which a sociologist might discover by objective methods. Le Page summarises his views in the following words:

Each individual creates the systems for his verbal behaviour so that they shall resemble those of the group or groups with which from time to time he may wish to be identified to the extent that,
a) he can identify the groups,

- b) he has both opportunity and ability to observe and analyse their behavioural systems,
- c) his motivation is sufficiently strong to impel him to choose, and to adapt his behaviour accordingly,
- d) he is still able to adapt his behaviour.¹(qtd. in Hudson 26)

R.A.Hudson takes a similar view according to which:

[---]individuals 'locate themselves in a multi dimensional space', the dimensions being defined by the groups they can identify in their society. [---] these groups definitely overlap. For instance a child may identify groups on the basis of sex, age, geography and race, and each grouping contribute something to the particular combination of linguistic items which they select as their own language. (26)

Trying to define a speech community becomes a complex task because it is impossible to identify such a community which has a language in common and nothing else. The question of language invariably interferes with other factors like common culture, history and the like. When such matters are taken note of, it can be observed that any speech community contains parts of several other speech communities. So Hudson is in favour of leaving the decision of identification with communities to the speaker himself because he

is the best person to decide whether he belongs to one group or another by way of speech characteristics as well as other social characteristics.

Bilingualism/Multilingualism

Bilingualism is a controversial term; the common meaning ascribed to this term is 'some one with equal and native command of two or more languages'. But this cannot be accepted because such an interpretation excludes the vast majority of cases. According to Bernard Spolsky, "In practice, then, scholars in this field treat bilingualism as a relative rather than an absolute phenomenon, and consider anyone able to produce (or even understand) sentences in more than one language as the proper object of their study"(100).

As Sridhar says:

Multilingualism involving balanced, native like command of all the languages in the repertoire is rather common. Typically, multilinguals have varying degrees of command of the different repertoires. The differences in competence in the various languages might range from command of a few lexical items, formulaic expressions such as greetings, and rudimentary conversational skills all the way to excellent command of the grammar and vocabulary and specialized register and styles.

Multilinguals develop competence in each of the codes to the extent that they need it and for the contexts in which each of the languages is used.(50)

The fact that people know and use more than one language has interested linguists of various sub fields and accordingly the topic is found, treated under the headings of 'neurolinguistics' 'language processing' 'second language learning', 'pidgin studies', 'language death', 'language and education' etc. If the focus of interest of the neurolinguist concerns the speciality of the bilingual brain, language-processing addresses questions like whether the two languages are stored and processed separately. Under second language learning comes the topic of how some people become bilinguals. Speakers of pidgins being bilingual, the topic occupies a definite place under pidgin studies too. Bilinguals who give up on the use of one language in favour of another lead to 'language death', another area in sociolinguistics.

Ronald Wardhaugh is of the opinion that, since words like dialect, language, register, pidgin, creole etc arouse many associations in the listener, a safe and neutral word to use would be code. A code refers to any kind of systems that people use for the purpose of communication. All the terms mentioned above come under the ambit of this neutral term.

It is not rare to find in many parts of the world individuals who make use of more than one code. We see that bilingualism or multilingualism is the

norm in many parts of the world. The indigenous Indians on the border between Colombia and Brazil live in groups called phratries; each phratry comprises five tribes with each tribe making use of a different language. But for the language difference other practices and customs are similar in all respects. Thus we can say that each phratry forms a language group; but at the same time all the people of the tribe are multilinguals because a man must marry outside his language group. The wife is bound to live along with the husband in his tribe and also talk in his language to the children born to them. Thus the first language of the children happens to be taught by the mother for whom the first language invariably is another one. But reports from the place do not reveal any irregularity or abnormality as far as language learning is concerned. It is seen that in any village several languages are used: the language of the men who belong to the tribe, the various languages spoken by women who have come from other tribes and also a wide spread regional 'trade' language. Children are born in to this multilingual environment; they are exposed to many numbers of languages. All the people in the community are interested in learning other languages and in the course of their conversation they shift easily from one to another. As Wardhaugh comments:

Multilingualism is a norm in this community. It results from the pattern of marriage and the living arrangements consequent to marriage. Communities are multilingual and no effort is made to suppress the variety of languages that are spoken. It is actually

seen as a source of strength, for it enables the speakers of the various linguistic communities to maintain contact with one another and provides a source for suitable marriage partners for those who seek them. (96)

Code-switching

Code-switching is the inevitable consequence of bilingualism/multilingualism. A person who speaks more than one language chooses between them according to circumstances. The main consideration in code-switching is selection of the language known to the person addressed. In a community where every one speaks the same range of languages (community multilingualism) the choice of the code is done according to social rules. Quite often one language is reserved for use at home, and another for the wider community. The choice of language is controlled by rules, which the members of the community learn from experience. Hudson gives the example of the village of Sauris, in Northern Italy where people speak one language at home, another among themselves in the village and a third one while talking to outsiders and in more formal village settings. This kind of code-switching is called **Situational code-switching**. Because of this particular situation prevailing in the place every one is generally seen to switch codes many times a day. The question arises here as to why the speakers of a whole community take pains to study many languages when just one language would serve the purpose of communication. The answer they give is that they find it wrong or

improper to speak at home the language they speak to outsiders. In fact each language has a social function to fulfill and using the wrong language, as determined by social rules, fails to fulfill this social function.

In the code-switching of the kind mentioned above, it is clearly the situation that decides language. But in certain circumstances, the speaker concentrates on the less observable characteristics of the listeners and changes his language to direct the situation along his lines. Such cases where the choice of language determines the situation are called as **metaphorical code-switching**.

Code-mixing

The term code-switching denotes switching from one code to another as the situation demands. But sometimes a fluent bilingual is seen to change his code while talking to another bilingual without any change in the situation. This kind of change is generally called as code-mixing(also conversational code-switching). As Hudson views it:

The purpose of code-mixing seems to be to symbolize a somewhat ambiguous situation for which neither language on its own would be quite right. To get the right effect the speakers balance the two languages against each other as a kind of linguistic cocktail – a few words of one language, then a few words of the other, then back to the first for a few more words

and so on. The changes generally take place more or less randomly. (53-54)

Dialect

Any realistic study of language takes in to consideration its variations based on different factors. No two people speak exactly alike and nobody speaks exactly the same at all times. But minor variations in language do not interest the linguist because he finds a fundamental underlying unity in them. But when people talk different varieties of the same language distinguished by features of phonology, grammar and vocabulary we call them as dialects. When large numbers of people belonging to different social groups and living in far-flung areas speak the same language, a lot of variations are bound to occur. Dialect differences are mainly confined to pronunciation and vocabulary. For written purposes speakers of different dialects generally use some kind of a standard language, which may be considered a neutral form to all dialects.

Peter Trudgill introduces the topic of social class and language variation thus:

Speaker A

I done it yesterday.

He ain't got it.

It was her what said it.

Trudgill comments:

Speaker B

I did it yesterday.

He hasn't got it.

It was her that said it.

If you heard these speakers say these things you would guess that B was of higher social status than A and you would almost certainly be right. How is it that we are able to do this sort of thing? The answer lies in the existence of varieties of language, which have come to be called social class dialects. There are grammatical differences between the speech of these two speakers, which give us clues about their social backgrounds. It is also probable, although this is not indicated on the printed page, that these differences will be accompanied by phonetic and phonological differences – that is to say, there are also different social - class accents. The internal differentiation of human societies is reflected in their languages. Different social groups use different linguistic varieties, and as experienced members of a speech community we have learned to classify speakers accordingly. (22-23)

Sociolinguists use the terms *social dialects* or *sociolects* to refer to differences in speech based on social class, sex, age, and religion. Because of one or more of these factors, a speaker may be more similar in language to people from the same social grouping in a different area than to people from a different social group in the same area.

The other important factor that functions, as determinant of speech is geographical. Since the nineteenth century dialectologists have been trying to study the geographical distribution of linguistic items such as pairs of synonymous words or different pronunciations of the same word. Wardhaugh comments thus about the subject:

Regional variation in the way a language is spoken is likely to be one of the most noticeable ways in which we observe variety in language. As you travel throughout a wide geographical area in which a language is spoken, and particularly if that language has been spoken in that area for many hundreds of years, you are almost certain to notice differences in pronunciation, in the choices and forms of words, and in syntax. There may even be very distinctive local colourings in the language which you notice as you move from one location to another. Such distinctive varieties are usually called *regional dialects* of the language.

Geographical dialects are, in fact, usually difficult to delimit exactly. The boundaries are not very often sharp; instead they are separated by broad zones of intergradations. This makes their classification difficult and subject to differences in interpretation. In England each country may be said to have its own regional dialect. One observation made by dialectologists is that

regional dialect boundaries quite often coincide with geographical barriers like mountains, swamps or rivers. The more the geographical distance between two dialects the greater the linguistic dissimilarity. The dialectologists in Europe and the United States, who studied the geographical distribution of linguistic items, plotted their results on a map showing which items were found in which villages. The dialect geographer would then draw a line between the area where one item was found and areas where others were found, showing a boundary for each area called an *isogloss* (Greek *iso-* 'same' and *gloss-* 'tongue').

The dialectologists of the previous century, while making a study of rural dialects observed those dialects associated with groups lowest in the social hierarchy changing gradually as they moved across the countryside. They could see a whole series of different dialects gradually merge in to one another. This series is referred to as a *dialect continuum* – a large number of different but not usually distinct non-standard dialects connected by a chain of similarity, but with the dialects at either end of the chain being very dissimilar.

Within a geographical dialect there may be a number of other variations depending on the occupation, education, and social status of the people. This gives rise to the class dialects. In a slum area and in the best residential neighbourhood dialects show a marked variation. With reference to the Indian

society it may be said that there are different dialects based on caste. Different castes living in the same area speak different dialects in India.

Dialects are subject to change. Population mobility has brought many people in to communities where they are surrounded by speakers of other dialects. Radio and television have greatly increased the hearing range. The increasing contact between speakers of different dialects inevitably affects the speech of all and diminishes differences. Many people, especially those removed very far by migration gradually lose the characteristics, which mark their origins. A dialectologist, however, can recognize their provenance because their conformity to the neighbours' pattern is usually only partial. A good number of old habits are retained unchanged or only slightly modified especially phonologic features, which are particularly resistant to change in adults.

Kamala Das, the author under study, is fine-tuned to subtle dialect differences among people. One of the major attractions of her Malayalam works forms such fine differentiation of language as observed by her, based on factors of class, caste and region. Januamma, the servant character, around whom many of her stories revolve, is in fact, a combination of three of her servants –Chirutheyamma, Kalyaniamma, and Paruvamma. They had been with her at various periods of her life but she remembers them in every

minute detail, especially their characteristic dialects. In the course of her talk with M.N Karassery, she reveals more about them:

There are many similarities in their speech, life-style and attitudes. Their rustic ways attracted me very much. In the midst of big cities, I sat looking at their rustic beauties. So, also there were fine differences between their dialects. When Kalyaniamma and Paruamma said 'chekkan' meaning young boy, Chirutheyiamma said 'kundan' instead. That is her Kozhikkode dialect.² (JPK 115).

The language spoken by many of her characters forms the typical dialect of the erstwhile Malabar area. The educated classes show variations from that typical dialect out of their familiarity with literary works and similar people from other areas. For example, Kamala's dialect varies to a very great extent from that of Valli, the servant who belonged to a lower caste. Kamala's amamma generally does not use abbreviated forms; it is different from that of her servants.

.Madhaviamma, please recite one or two slokas"*, Kamala said.³

"Madhavi doesn't seem to remember any sloka, right now", amamma said. (NPK 185, 186).

* Four lined poem.

"This humble one also wants to listen to Madhavi Madam's sloham", said Valli." (NPK 186)

The woman Madhavi is addressed by Kamala as 'Madhaviamma', by ammamma as Madhavi itself and by the lower class servant as 'Madhavi amral'. The suffixes 'amma' and 'amral' indicate the respect shown to the addressee on account of her age and social distance. The word 'sloka' is altered to 'sloham' when uttered by Valli. (NPK186) Valli's language, extremely humble in tone and vocabulary, is somewhat as given here: "Why, young lady, Your Grace is asking such questions. Oh, Please, for God's sake, do not ask Valli such questions. This humble one will be kicked out by the lady of the house."⁴(VM123-24) When Kunjathu, the Christian from Kottappadi talks, 'Madhaviamma' becomes 'Madhiyema'. (NPK196)

Kunjathu makes use of many expressions typical of his native place. He is the only person in Kamala's works who uses the word 'shavi'* (NPK56) Dialectical variations based on caste, class and region forms a very interesting object of study in the works of Kamala Das.

* 'Shavi' is a regional version of the Malayalam word 'shavam' (dead body) used as a mild term of abuse in a very limited area of Thirur district only.

Diglossia

The term 'diglossia' was introduced in to English language literature on sociolinguistics by Charles Fergusson (1959) in order to describe the situation found in certain places like Greece, the Arabic speaking world in general, German speaking Switzerland and island of Haiti. In these places people resort to two varieties, distinct enough to be called as separate languages, one on formal and public occasions and the other in daily everyday circumstances. These two varieties are normally called 'high' and 'low' or 'standard' and 'vernacular'. Fergusson defines diglossia thus:

Diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standard), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation.(325)

The diglossic situation existing in the Arab speaking community is such that the highly educated and the least educated speakers use the same

variety of language at home; but on formal occasions it is a variety much different from the vernacular that is being used and this can be learned at schools only. This formal variety is taught in schools just like a foreign language. In a lecture at a university or a sermon in a mosque, invariably this high variety known as standard Arab is being used. Since everybody uses the low variety at home, the high variety can be learned only by going to school. By being born in to a high-class family one does not learn the prestigious variety; only through schooling this is learned.

Peter Trudgill defines the term diglossia thus:

Diglossia is a particular kind of language standardization where two distinct varieties of a language exist side by side throughout the speech community (not just in the case of a particular group of speakers, and where each of the two varieties is assigned a definite social function.(97-98)

Trudgill lists examples of a few language communities, which are diglossic, together with names used:

	High	Low
Swiss German	Hoch deutsch	Schweizer deutsch
Arab	Classical	Colloquial
Tamil	Literary	Colloquial

The diglossic situation is characterized by the specialization of function of the two varieties. This has variations depending on the community; but generally the high variety is used in university lectures, newspaper editorials, sermons, formal letters, 'high' poetry etc. The low variety is resorted to in family talks, friendly talks, radio serials, political cartoons and folk literature. In the diglossic situation it is observed that the two varieties have names and are felt to be distinct. The situations where each is to be used are socially fairly well defined – no section of the community regularly uses the high variety as the normal medium of everyday conversation. Anyone using the high variety in informal situations is normally looked at with scorn. In German Switzerland it is even considered as disloyalty if a person uses the high variety, standard German as the medium of everyday conversation because it is the medium used by speakers outside Switzerland.

S.K.Pottekkat, in his travelogue *Balidweep* talks about a very interesting language situation in the island of Bali, which is, situated at the southern most end of the Asian continent. All the people of the island are expected to know three languages that are different in all respects like vocabulary, grammar and sentence structures; but still considered as Bali language. The three varieties used are named as 'uccha', 'neecha' and 'shudha', more or less similar to the English terms 'high', 'low', and 'medium'. In the class differentiated society, the lower castes while talking to

the upper castes resort to the 'uccha' or 'high' variety and the other way round it is 'neecha' or 'low' variety. Between equals and at home or the market place the 'shudha' or medium variety is used. It is very fascinating to observe a conversation between two people who belong to different caste strata: one belonging to the high and the other the low. They begin the conversation in the 'medium' language and then find out each other's caste. After that the conversation becomes dramatic and each one sticks to the variety of language as fixed by the societal norms. The high variety is metaphoric and has a very rich vocabulary to suit each occasion. The lower variety contains less number of words and is more plain and lacks idiomatic expressions. In the 'high' variety 'rain' is denoted as 'sabang' and in the 'low' variety it is 'hujang'. All people except the blacksmiths are bound to follow these rules regarding the use of language based on caste. The blacksmith or 'pande' who works with fire and metal is held in awe by even the highest caste, as he is believed to possess magical powers. The blacksmith, therefore, can talk to the higher castes in the low variety and the other castes have to resort to the high variety while talking to him.

Idiolect

An individual member of a given dialect is said to have his own speech habits that distinguish him from fellow members of the group to which he belongs. The totality of the speech habits of an individual is called an idiolect.

So it can be said that a dialect is a collection of similar idiolects and that a language is a collection of dialects.

Register

Language is similar to other forms of social activities in that, it has to be appropriate to the speaker as well as to the social context of its use. The same speaker uses different linguistic varieties in different situations and for different purposes. . Sociolinguists use the word verbal repertoire to refer to the totality of linguistic varieties used by a particular community of speakers. Social factors determine the variety to be used from this verbal repertoire. When people talk to others they work with, about their work, they generally use a particular variety of language, which they do not use at home. Such a language variety is called as register. While dialects are user oriented, registers are use oriented. Variation between speakers gives rise to dialect and variation based on occasion gives rise to registers. Trudgill defines a register as follows:

Linguistic varieties that are linked in this way to occupations, professions, or topics have been termed registers. The register of law, for example, is different from the register of medicine, which in turn is different from the language of engineering – and so on. Registers are usually characterized solely by vocabulary differences: either by the use of particular words, or

by the use of words in a particular sense. [...]. Similarly professional soccer players and lay people both discuss football. The footballers however are much more likely, in Britain, to refer to the playing area as the *park*, than the laypeople, who are probably more likely to call it the *pitch*. (84-85)

Style

On solemn occasions and for academic lectures, we resort to the use of a more formal variety of language different from that used for public house arguments or family talk. Linguistic varieties that are linked in this way to the formality of the situation is generally termed as styles and they range between formal to informal. Styles and registers are to be seen as occurring independently. The register of football as used in a report in a high – status newspaper is of a formal style whereas the same thing in a bar comes to an informal style.

Pidgin and Creole

A pidgin may be defined as an amalgam of linguistic features of two or more languages and it is born out of social and economic transactions between two groups or more speaking different languages. Of the many languages that come in to contact the socially superior one undergoes a process of restriction and simplification leading to the birth of pidgin. This process of restriction and simplification is termed pidginization. A pidgin is

no one's native language. When it becomes the native language of a speech community, it comes to be called a creole. As the pidgin gets nativized, it undergoes extension and elaboration. The greater functional and structural complexity and stability in usage distinguishes a creole from a pidgin. By the time a pidgin becomes a creole, it will have acquired all the functions and characteristics of a full natural language.

In a multilingual contact situation there are a number of language choices and the pidgin is only one such choice. Some times the native language of one of the groups in contact may be used, as is the case of English in Australia. Sometimes a stable multilingual situation continues to persist without the origin of a pidgin. The language which supplies the major part of the vocabulary of the pidgin is that which is spoken by the socially superior group called the superstrate language. The one or more languages that contribute less to the pidgin are spoken by the socially inferior groups and called as the substrate languages.

Pidgins grow out of economic necessity. Economic relations of trade or enforced labour make it essential for the different groups to resort to a common language. The language of the superior group is not easily available to the lower groups and so it cannot function as the contact language. Similarly, a language from the subordinate groups is also never allowed to function in this role as it has association with the inferiors. The non-

availability of the superstrate language to others may be because its speakers are very small in number compared to that of the substrate speakers. This is supposed to be the reason for the origin of Tok Pisin, a pidgin used in New Guinea, which is a linguistically complex area in the world. Yimas Pidgin, and Police Motu are two other pidgins spoken in New Guinea where, about a thousand languages are spoken. Another reason is that the superstrate speakers do not want others to learn their language; they treat it as a badge of their distinctive cultural identity and hide it from the outsiders in front of whom they speak a different variety specialized for use in contact situations with speakers of other languages.

Whatever the reasons may be, the pidgin that arises in a restricted social context has a much-reduced range of linguistic functions to perform, in comparison with native languages. Generally, a pidgin functions to make people perform certain functions within a plantation or trading context. It is not used for other functions like building social relationships or expressing abstract ideas or for creating literary works. A pidgin is said to have creolized only when it is able to perform all such linguistic functions. A pidgin may develop and become structurally elaborated but still it cannot be called as a creole as long as its social role has expanded from being a mere contact language in to one with higher functions. Mühlhäusler presents the life history

of a pidgin thus: unstable jargon—stable pidgin—expanded pidgin—creole.⁵
(qtd. in William A. Foley 167)

Linguistic variation and Social correlation

Sociolinguistics being the study of the social uses of language is multidimensional in orientation. Generally speaking there is a wide range of functions to which language can be put, the primary one being ‘referential’ i.e. to exchange facts and opinions. Another one is the ‘emotive’ or ‘expressive’ function of language i.e. use of language to give an outlet to sudden emotions (like the words ‘ouch’, ‘wow’, ‘my’, ‘what a pity!’ etc). Yet another function of language is to establish rapport or signal friendship between people, otherwise called as phatic communion. But ordinarily it goes unnoticed by many that even a brief conversation provides much scope for a serious linguistic study. People reveal a lot about themselves, their background, and their characters while they are engaged in verbal exchange. People gather a lot of information about other people engaged in conversation; this becomes all the more interesting when they are strangers. In such a case the hearer is not constrained by any pre-suppositions; but after listening to a few sentences he gains a lot of information about the stranger. J. K. Chambers classifies the kinds of inferences in to five categories as 1) personal, 2) stylistic, 3) social 4) socio-cultural and 5) sociological

Personal characteristics

The voice of a person can be high or low-pitched, nasal or open, monotonal or moving up and down along the scale. So also observations like fluent or hesitant speech, articulate or vague speech lead the listener to derive impressions of the other person's character. Similarly observation of the vocabulary can also be an interesting area of study. But observations at this personal level have not led to much serious linguistic study. How personal speech characteristics differ from society to society or how these characteristics are used by listeners to frame judgments about speakers could be taken up more seriously under sociolinguistic research.

Linguistic styles

The degree of familiarity between the participants in a conversation, their relative ages and ranks, the function of their conversation and similar matters emerge out of the conversation and it is speech style that determines such things. The range of possibilities is wide. The casualness between intimate friends who share a lot of experiences and the formality of unequal participants who are meeting for the first time – with numerous intervening levels. The most important thing to be noticed is that stylistic differences have a simple social correlate: formality increases in direct proportion to the number of social differences between the participants.

Social characteristics

Chambers comments thus about the social characteristics of human speech:

Whenever we speak we reveal not only some personality traits and certain sensitivity to the contextual style, but also a whole configuration of characteristics that we by and large share with everyone who resembles us socially. Usually without much conscious effort on our part, we embody in our speech, as in our dress, manners, and material possessions the hallmarks of our social background. Our speech, from this perspective, is emblematic in the same sense as is the car we drive or the way we dress for work but, obviously, our speech is much less manipulable, much harder to control consciously, and for that reason much more revealing. Generally people tend to associate with others who share with them certain social characteristics. Class, sex and age are some of the social factors that exercise much influence on human behaviour and language. These primary determinants of social roles are quite complex and carry within them a host of social factors.

Socio-cultural factors

Certain topics that are discussed by people and the ways in which they discuss them are quite often culturally determined. This applies most to phatic communion i.e. different kinds of speech events used for greeting people at various occasions. The term 'namasthe', said with the palms together for greeting people is purely Indian in origin and cannot be substituted with any term from any other language. Similarly, the conversation-ender, "Have a nice day" has its origins in the United States and started spreading outwards in the 1970s. Now it is used outside the United States in many parts, but it is still a stylish Americanism. In the case of culture-laden interactions, the non-verbal component is equally or more important than the verbal. There are places where the shopkeepers sell their wares in silence and place their change on the counter, and thus wind up the transaction. Similarly, words gain different implications from culture to culture; subtle differences bound in discourse rules and all these reflect the sociocultural climate of the place where the interaction takes place.

Sociological factors

Language has much to do with the social structure also; this kind of sociological function is evident in the conventionalized use of address forms and pronoun varieties. Distinctions between 'nii' and 'ningal' or 'taan' as used in Kerala; 'esi' or 'esis' in Greece or 'tu' or 'vous' in France have no

relevance linguistically but sociologically they are extremely relevant because such distinctions mark the social ranks of the participants.

Of the different kinds of information that can be inferred from the speech of people, the social aspects have gained the highest degree of attention from sociolinguists. Variability of language and its study based on individual speakers have gradually given way to variability studies on large scale and linguists like Labov have come up with the finding that the occurrence of variability in a speech community is systematic, and patterned and it depends on certain factors like social class, caste, ethnic group, sex, nation, geography etc.

Language and social class

All societies are marked by division of people in to various classes, based on their wealth, privilege, and opportunities. It is a commonly observed fact that people who share similarity in such factors, come together and knowingly or unknowingly they distance themselves from other groups. Quite often such differentiations go unnoticed because class-consciousness turns out to be harmless and tolerable quite often. So also in most societies class divisions are arbitrary in the sense that an ambitious man can break class barriers and do away with any stigma attached to him by way of being a member of any particular class. One of the markers of stratification is 'class' as far as any society is concerned.

The topic of class divisions and its consequences has been taken up and studied elaborately by economists, sociologists, and psychologists. Class differentiation and its linguistic consequences is only one dimension of the topic. Social stratification - the hierarchical ordering of groups within a society - is what gives rise linguistically to social class dialects. The notion of 'social class' is a highly controversial one. Since there is no uniformity regarding its nature or existence in different places sociological theorists approach the topic from different angles, but the fact remains that a social class is an "aggregate of individuals with similar social and /or economic characteristics"(Trudgill23-24).

According to Chambers, the study of the linguistic consequences of social class is important because:

In the industrialized nations, social class is the most linguistically marked aspect of our social being. Our closest ties are more local, in what are called networks. The extent to which we participate in the activities of our families, neighbourhoods, clubs and other local entities - or distance ourselves from them - also has linguistic consequences. (41)

In industrialized nations, the major social division is between people who earn their living by working with their hands and those who do the same by pencil work or intellectual work. Accidentally, the manual workers have

come to be called as “working class” and the non-manual workers as “middle class”. Another class consisting of people with inherited wealth and privilege - called as the upper class exists in some nations of the world; but they are limited in number and dwindling down in the present age and not significant enough to be considered from a linguistic point of view in most countries.

Most sociolinguists refer to India as an example of a highly stratified caste society. Even in the present day, at least in certain parts of India language contributes to the continuing significance of caste in India. Madhavikkutty’s childhood days represent such a period in the history of India when people were segregated in to various castes and caste formed the basis of all social activities and divisions. Caste and its linguistic relevance has been dealt with in Chapter IV.

India is basically a caste based society and many sociolinguistics have taken interest in studying the language scenario in India based on this factor. The argument of most sociolinguists, of late, is that class systems and caste systems are not separate types of social organizations; the two systems appear to be poles on a continuum. Chambers who is in favour of viewing the two as very similar systems presents the situation thus:

They share the essential characteristics of an unequal distribution of material and personal goods. They differ in that in a class system people who by birth and circumstance start out

as members of one rank can ascend (or descend) to another rank. In other words the essential difference is mobility. A caste system is a class system with no social or occupational mobility (60)

Language and gender

In most societies there are a large number of differences between the speech of men and women. At least in certain respects, the linguistic forms used by men and women differ in all speech communities that have been studied. In some cases the differences are negligible and not generally noticed. But in some societies the differences reach such dimensions that men and women appear to talk different languages altogether. Language differences occurring on account of class, ethnic group etc. can be explained in terms of density of communication. In the case of regional varieties of language, geographical barriers such as mountains, and rivers are relevant i.e. speakers to the south and north of a river pronounce words differently. So also, greater the geographical distance between the two dialects, the more dissimilar they are linguistically. Similarly, social barriers and social distance seem to be relevant in the explanation of social varieties of language. Social barriers like class, age, race, and religion can, in fact, halt the diffusion of a linguistic feature through a society. So also, a linguistic innovation that begins amongst the highest social group will not easily affect the lowest social group.

But it is not possible to explain gender-based language differences in terms of social distance because in most societies men and women communicate freely with one another. Different theories have been attributed to sex-based language differences. The language of the Carib-Indians shows clear demarcation between male and female varieties. The reason is attributed to the mixing of two languages as the Caribs came to occupy the islands. They exterminated the existing Arawak tribe except the women whom they married in order to populate the country. Probably, the women continued to speak the Arawak language with modifications coming in due to the influence of the Carib language.

Another theory, a plausible explanation, is provided by the linguist Otto Jespersen who is of the view that language differentiation may be the result of the phenomenon of taboo. In addition to the physical environment and social structure, the values of a society can have great influence on its language. This happens mainly through the phenomenon known as taboo. Trudgill defines taboo thus:

Taboo can be characterized as being concerned with behaviour which is believed to be supernaturally forbidden, or regarded as immoral or improper; it deals with behaviour which is prohibited or inhibited in an apparently irrational manner. In language, taboo is associated with things, which are *not* said,

and in particular with words and expressions which are *not* used. In practice, of course, this simply means that there are inhibitions about the normal use of items of this kind - if they were not said at all they could hardly remain in the language.(17)

In different parts of the world taboo words are different and approach to same also varies. This is one area where male and female language show marked deviation. Many societies expect a higher level of adherence to social norms-better behaviour and better language- from women than they do from men. The social pressures on women arising by way of the gender discrimination is quite high because they are expected to acquire the prestige variety or more socially acceptable language.

Wardhaugh tries to give different types of explanations for the gender differences that are observed in language behaviour. One explanation is that language may be sexist. Another reason, according to him, is that men and women are biologically different and this difference has serious consequences as far as language is concerned. Women are pre-disposed psychologically to be involved with one another and more cooperative and non-competitive. But men are innately pre-disposed to independence and vertical rather than horizontal relationships, i.e. to power rather than to solidarity.

Yet another explanation is that social organization is best perceived as some kind of hierarchical set of power relationships. This is a social fact by which men have the upper hand. Difference in social language behaviour reflects the social dominance of men. They try to take control while talking to women and also while talking to each other. Wardhaugh is of the opinion that language behaviour is largely learned behaviour. Men learn to be men and women learn to be women linguistically speaking.

The head voices of the Peking opera sound very strange to an untrained ear and like-wise the outbursts of high-pitched wailing of professional mourners in Greece also produces wonder in the outsiders. There are studies by Japanese researchers to the effect that Japanese women speak Japanese language, and English language using different pitch while men speak both languages with the same pitch. There may be individual speakers who deviate from this norm but the majority adheres to it. (Coulmas³⁷). Pitch has been thought to be very much a natural feature but studies prove that even this is a cultural construct to a very large extent. Other than pitch there are so many features of speech behaviour that vary with the sex of the speaker.

Coulmas distinguishes between the words 'sex' and 'gender' in a subtle manner thus, "sex is nature, gender is culture"(38). Research has authentically established that gender is a factor of linguistic variation. The case of the participle suffix in words like *walking*, *running*, and *jumping* has

been taken up by many researchers to establish how phonological variables in different realizations mark regional or social dialects. Surveys have revealed that some pronounce the words as [ɪn] and some as [ɪŋ]. The researchers realized that they should be guided by the relative frequency of the variables in the speech of the selected people rather than the presence or absence of it. In fact, all speakers of all social groups control and use both social forms-*in* [ɪn] and *-ing* [ɪŋ]; but the frequencies of their choice differ. What is relevant and valuable is the observation that these frequencies are not random; preferences by various groups of speakers exhibit systematic pattern, which can be linked to extra-linguistic factors. Surveys have shown that the proportion of the reduced form [ɪn] is highest in the lowest social group and lowest in the highest social group. Thus, it follows that the [ɪŋ] form, which is used more by the higher social groups, is considered more prestigious. Many who have done research in this area for quite long have come up with another interesting observation as a result of their breaking down the data along gender lines. The fact is that women tend to use the prestigious varieties more frequently than men. This is common to all social strata; but the differential between men and women is more conspicuous in the lower social groups. Women of the higher social groups are oriented more towards the prestige variety. The reason may be that women of the higher social groups are more concerned about their social position or probably, they want to sound

less local and gain an image as of not being inferior to men. As Coulmas comments upon it:

It is also important to remember that the preferred use of the standard or prestige variants by women is a tendency typical of groups of speakers, not individuals. Women and men do not speak as women and men only but as teachers and students, friends and strangers, clerks and customers, employers and employees, as members of an ethnic group, religious community and so on, and in many other more individualized capacities. (41)

Further studies have also shown that the social networks in which men and women move about do have a bearing upon the speech variants they use. This is more applicable to women who tend to interact more than men in dense, multiplex networks. But studies also point to the fact that speaker-sex cannot be taken as a primary independent variable and that additional variables like employment status, education, having children or not do have a deep impact on women's choice of speech variants. In every aspect like words used by men and women, the ways they address each other and respond to each other the sex/ gender difference becomes of utmost importance.

Language and age

Age has been identified as another important factor in linguistic choice. Language is a tradition; otherwise we would not understand one another. According to Coulmas:

It must be handed down from one generation to the next in a way that allows members of co-existing generations to communicate. But it is not handed down unaltered. For each generation recreates the language of its predecessors (52).

As one generation hands down its language to the next, a lot of changes takes place in it. Probably the reason is that communication needs change and this forces the users to bring about changes in the language to suit the world of their experience. Human life span is divisible in to four age cohorts, infancy, adolescence, adulthood and old age. They differ from each other in various ways, of which language use is one important one.

Age differentiation of speech starts at the very beginning. Babies cannot talk like grown-ups. Language socialization takes years. Language socialization is the process by which the young one learns to talk like adults. Social interaction as well as deliberate instruction by others is equally important in the socialization of a child. Coulmas uses the word 'Parentese' to refer to the short, simple sentences used by parents, delivered slowly and articulated carefully while talking to young children. In fact, the parents

adjust their speech when they talk with children; but the way they speak to children is a product of their own individual stylistic choice and of the stereotype current in that particular society. Parentese is an interesting topic from a sociolinguistic point of view because it is a stylistic register that the adult develops for the purpose of social interaction with the young ones.

Madhavikkutty mentions many instances when she used to interact with her little sons using a sort of 'parentese'. It was her habit to talk to the children remaining hidden underneath the cot without revealing her identity. Quite often she talked as though she was 'Lord Krishna' having come to meet the small ones. They would also talk back as they were happy to be in the presence of Krishna. This technique, she claims, very much pleased the children and taught them to be imaginative although initially it all took place unknowingly.

The language of adolescents is perhaps the most thoroughly investigated one of the different age-related ones. Adolescents are competent speakers of their language, and they have complete control over it. They inherit the language from the adults; but they bring about modifications over it to make it different from adult language. Coulmas summarises the features and functions that characterize adult speech in the following words:

Use of sub-standard, dialectal, and vernacular forms, slang and innovative, often short lived expressions serve three main

functions: 1) to appropriate the language for the speakers' own purposes; 2) to manifest group membership and construct a distinct identity; and 3) to indicate the speakers' willingness to resist the pressure to conform to societal norms (60).

It is seen that the young and middle-aged adults form the dominant age-cohort in most societies and their behaviour and speech forms the norm of the society.

When adults try to garnish their speech with up-to-the minute expressions, it comes to be noticed immediately because thereby they are breaking the norm and trying to belong to the adolescent sub culture. It is adults who command maximum societal strength and at the same time undergo maximum pressure to conform to existing norms. The use of stigmatized varieties is also the minimum during adulthood.

In old age or the last phase of life, the pressures to conform to societal norms are minimum. In fact, the characteristics of elderly speech are much disregarded by society because it is not generally regarded as a matter of choice but as a natural concomitant of ageing accompanied by progressive decline of competence. The communication patterns that result from ageing are not usually included as topics coming under sociolinguistics. People of other age groups quite often adopt a sort of patronizing attitude and modified style of talk while communicating with the elderly. Many elderly people find

it distressing to be addressed in this manner and this, in fact opens up another area of research in sociolinguistics.

Language and ethnicity

Language, quite often, becomes a defining characteristic of ethnic-group membership. In some cases the separate identity of ethnic groups is projected not by different languages, but by different varieties of the same language. As Trudgill comments:

It remains true, however, that in many cases language may be an important or even essential concomitant of ethnic group membership. This is a social fact, though, and it is important to be clear about what sort of processes may be involved. (41)

Language and context

Language varies not only according to the above-mentioned social characteristics of speakers but also along with the social context in which they are placed. The same speaker uses different linguistic varieties in different situations and for different purposes. The totality of the linguistic varieties used in this way constitutes that person's verbal repertoire. Every person has a verbal repertoire, which is part of the repertoire of the community to which he belongs. An individual chooses words from the repertoire depending on the occasion. Speech made use of in the office is very much different from the

one used among intimate relations at home. Similarly, academic lectures and ceremonial occasions demand more serious and formal language compared to friendly chitchat or talk over family lunch. Language also varies according to whether it is written or spoken. Other conditions being equal, written language is ordinarily more formal than spoken. Literary variety of language is much different from that made use of in personal correspondences.

Another very important aspect regarding the use of language is determined by the relationships between the persons involved in the conversation and their relative statuses. Speech between individuals of unequal rank - due to varying status in the office, or by belonging to different class or age group - is likely to be much more formal and less relaxed than between equals. In many cultures there are different forms of address stipulated to be followed by people of unequal statuses or relationships. Different degrees of politeness or intimacy are signaled linguistically. Plenty of examples are available in Madhavikkutty's memory works showing how unequal relationships of her childhood days as they existed in the society of her days had much linguistic relevance. The diglossic situation observed in many countries is a result of the long-term social inequality practiced there.

Language and social interaction

It has been observed quite often that people switch over from one language to another or from one dialect to another easily. Such choices are in

fact imbued with social meaning. Whether it is a language or a dialect, the social meanings associated with its selection are similar and so linguists have conveniently chosen the word 'code' to indicate any such choice. A code can be a language or a variety of it. When such code switching is carried out, the speakers are generally aware of the two distinct varieties, although they may not be conscious of every switch they make. Code switching occurs spontaneously and not without prior preparation. Coulmas presents the following situation as a typical example of code switching: A Sicilian fishmonger addresses a customer in the local dialect. He switches to Italian in answering the customer's question, but then switches back to the dialect while the customer continues speaking Italian. This is a typical example of situational code switching. Ideal code switchers speak at least two languages, which are habitually spoken in their community. They can speak both languages sufficiently well, although they may not be equally proficient in both. A wine connoisseur who remarks in mock consternation, 'He drank this wine from a beer glass quelle horreur!' can not be considered as a case of regular situational code-switching ; he uses it for a metaphorical purpose only, sometimes it is referred to as 'affective switching'. A flight attendant en route from London to Hongkong who makes announcements alternatively in English and Chinese is not doing the switching spontaneously; on the other hand it is an example of rehearsed switching.

On the whole it can be said that it is not easy to say why people code switch. Researchers say that individual speakers have their own reasons for choosing one language at one time and another language at another time.

There are a large number of terms associated with sociolinguistic studies; but only the most basic and essential to the studies have been mentioned in this context.

Notes

¹Le Page, R. and Tabouret-Keller, A. *Acts of Identity: Creole-Based Approaches to Language and Ethnicity*. Cambridge: CUP, 1985.

² അവരുടെ വർത്തമാനത്തിനും ജീവിതരീതിക്കും വീക്ഷണത്തിനും ഒക്കെ പല തരം സമാനതകളുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. ആ നാടൻ രീതികൾ എന്നെ വല്ലാതെ ആകർഷിച്ചു. വൻനഗരങ്ങളുടെ നടുവിൽ ഞാൻ അവരുടെ നാടൻ ഭംഗികളിലേയ്ക്ക് നോക്കി ഇരുന്നു. പിന്നെ ഇവർക്കൊക്കെ ചില്ലറ വൃത്യാസങ്ങളും ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നു. ഉദാഹരണത്തിന് കുട്ടി എന്ന് അർത്ഥത്തിൽ കല്യാണിയമ്മയും പാറുവമ്മയും 'ചെക്കൻ' എന്നു പറയുമ്പോൾ ചിരുതേയിയമ്മ 'കുണ്ടൻ' എന്നു പറയും അത് അവരുടെ കോഴിക്കോടാൻ മൊഴി. (ജാനുവമ്മ പറഞ്ഞ കഥ 115).

³ 'മാധവിയമ്മ ഒന്ന്, രണ്ട് ശ്ലോകങ്ങൾ ചൊല്ലൂ, കമല പറഞ്ഞു.

“മാധവിക്ക് ശ്ലോകം തോന്നാവില്ല” അമ്മമ്മ പറഞ്ഞു.

“അടിയനും കേക്കണം മാധവിമുളുടെ സ്റ്റോഹം.” വള്ളി പറഞ്ഞു.

⁴“എന്താ ഇബ്ക്ന ഈയാതി ചോദ്യോക്കെ ചോയിക്കണ് ചെറിയസ്ഥാട്ടാരെ? അയ്യേ, വള്ളിയോട് ഈയാതി ചോദ്യോന്നും ചോയിക്കർത്ത്. അടിയനെ വല്ലാ പ്രാട്ടാർ ചവ്തിപ്പൊറത്താക്കുംട്ടൊ. (വർഷങ്ങൾക്കു മുമ്പ് 123).

⁵ Mühlhäusler, P. "Samoan Plantation Pidgin English and the Origin of New Guina Pidgin". In E. Wooford & W. Washabaugh (eds.) *The Social Context of Creolization*. Ann Arbor: Karoma.

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Kamala Das - Her Literary Efflorescence and the Social Background

Kamala. K. “The bard who sings of love and life...A Sociolinguistic Study of Kamala Das's Works ” Thesis. Department of English , University of Calicut, 2006

Chapter IV

Kamala Das – Her Literary Efflorescence and the Social Background

A language is the property of a social community, impregnated with the values and thought patterns of that community.

Roger Fowler

Chapters II and III provide the solid foundation on which to work up a sociolinguistic study of Kamala Das. The major chunk of studies in the field of sociolinguistics have been done related to speech collected as field data. Not only speech but written words as well yield to sociolinguistic study because they also bear the stamp of the society on them. This chapter is such an attempt, a sociolinguistic reading of Kamala Das's works. Most of the works of Kamala Das have been introduced in the work; but special emphasis has been given to some for a sociolinguistic reading. A lot of dialect differences can be noticed among the different people who constituted the dependants of Nalappat house, the author's maternal household. But it is not possible to reflect all such differences since only a study in Malayalam can do justice to subtle dialect differences in the language.

J.K. Chambers correlates the individual and the society thus:

All societies are characterized by inequalities in the distribution of wealth, privilege and opportunity. And in all societies, people who have very similar wealth, privileges and opportunities usually have very similar recreations, attitudes and values, thus further distinguishing themselves from the social groups above and below them. (39)

It is a very common observation that a person's affiliation with other members of the society has linguistic consequences. The extent to which an individual takes part in the activities going on around him- whether it is the family, neighborhood or clubs- has also a lot of linguistic consequences. But it also remains that the very same individual who is a typical representative of his social class, exudes marks of individuality in his linguistic behaviour as well as in the general conduct. Rarely the society is blessed with such people who speak very differently from every one else and of course they are acknowledged by the society for their wonderful linguistic skills. Such people with unusual oratorical or writing skills stand out from others and leave their indelible imprint on the age in which they live, for the future generations. Chambers comments about such people thus:

Perhaps they belong to a category of way out outsiders, but we will probably never find enough of them to be sure. What we do know for sure is that they are very rare. For the most part,

people sound the way you would expect them to sound given the facts about their class, sex, age and region. The sociolinguistic evidence strongly supports George Eliot's observation, in *Middlemarch*, that "there is no creature whose inward being is so strong it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it."(115)

Study of the works of such a rarity, who has won fame and recognition within the country as well as all over the world, concentrating specially on the language elements, with a view to elicit what is individualistic about it and what features tie it to the society around forms the thrust of this chapter.

A genuine writer, through his/her writings, creates the social environment in which he/she has grown up and to a keen observer it becomes evident that the very same social set up has moulded his/her thinking faculty and creative genius. The works of Kamala Das bear testimony to this fact and a casual glance through them justifies the type of personality that she is and the touch of genius that Kamala Das possesses. John Gumperz connects language and society thus:

Verbal interaction is a social process in which utterances are selected in accordance with socially recognized norms and expectations. It follows that linguistic phenomena are analyzable both within the context of language itself and within

the broader context of social behaviour. In the formal analysis of language the object of attention is a particular body of linguistic data abstracted from the settings in which it occurs and studied primarily from the point of view of its referential function. In analyzing linguistic phenomena within a socially defined universe, however, the study is of language usage as it reflects more general behaviour norms (219).

The transformation from **Amy**, to **Kamala Das**, to **Madhavikkutty** and to **Kamala Surayya** was not an accidental one; on the other hand Amy's growth was entwined with the social changes that came up around her, with the perspectives of the people – educated ones, elite groups, and the poor working class men and women who moved like satellites around her maternal house called Nalappat, and also the servants in the Calcutta house-all with whom she associated herself a lot, and many other factors. Amy was a keen observer of men and matters and a very sensitive girl who held a very lofty view of the concept of 'love'. She found 'lack of love' to be the root cause of all evils of life and advocated the practice of love as panacea for all ills.

Kamala Das is a writer who cannot be tied down to a particular place or class easily. Owing to the riots related to freedom struggle, Kamala had to move between Calcutta and Punneyurkulam and spend some years of her childhood at her mother's ancestral home called Nalappat in Punneyurkulam.

Nalappat was a highly respected *nair* family of those days and as affirmed by the author in many works, she cherishes the childhood days in Nalappat more than the city life in which she used to feel lonely and neglected quite often. In between she also had one or two years of convent education in a school in Thrissur. On the whole she had a very rich repertoire of experiences to draw up on and the wonderful creative talents she inherited from her mother and maternal uncle helped her to transform those in to great works where fact and fiction are inseparable to a very great extent.

Gumperz relates language to social structure thus:

Just as intelligibility presupposes underlying grammatical rules, the communication of social information presupposes the existence of regular relationships between language usage and social structure. (220).

A person who participates in a community of active readers and writers, and who reads and writes regularly and is kept in touch with other people, he/she stands a high chance of forming notions of genre, style etc and becomes increasingly sophisticated about the act of writing itself. Kamala was one such very lucky person in this regard.

Kamala Das started writing under the pen name Madhavikkutty and the reason she ascribed to the selection of this name is that she never wanted to hurt the sentiments of her grandmother whom she loved and respected more

than even her father and mother. She believed that her grand mother whom she fondly called as ammamma, in keeping with the custom of those days, would be sore reading the kind of books she wrote because the moral code she had imbibed never permitted her to discuss suppressed desires or matters related to the needs of the body. According to Kamala, ammamma was an angel whose sole aim in life was the well-being of the members of the Nalappat house. Not wanting to hurt the poor lady Kamala decided that she would choose a pseudonym Madhavikkutty (Madhavi because she was Madhava's wife and kutty because she was just a small girl.) Young Kamala who had learned from her the value of love and the need to love all human beings, was at the same time, bound by a sense of awareness and of social responsibility. She thought it her right and duty to discuss those matters considered taboo by ammamma and the conservative society around her. But it was a painful thought to Kamala that her ammamma would worry on her account. Kamala was happy that the old woman never came to know of her identity as she had chosen the pen name Madhavikkutty.

VarshangalkuMumbu, Balyakalasmaranakal, and Neermathalam Poothakalam are the major works of Madhavikkutty set against her ancestral home and covering roughly the third and fourth decades of the twentieth century. Even a casual reading of these autobiographical works reveals the unique caste system that prevailed in Kerala which stratified people in to various levels depending on the nature of their profession handed down to

them from generation to generation. Distinctions based on wealth or status is part of any social set up; but the caste system differs from them in that one cannot out step the boundaries of the caste in to which one is born. Class boundaries can be breached by ambitious people but one cannot be free of the restrictions imposed by caste. J.K. Chambers comments about the caste system thus:

Caste systems are societies based on hereditary occupational groups, in which individuals automatically and inexorably become members of the occupational group they are born in to. The best-studied caste system is the Hindu of India, with ranks rigidly ordered starting from Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Sudra, to Untouchable. (59)

He adds that he finds caste systems to be not much different from the class system, which prevails in most other countries. The essential difference between the two is one of mobility. A caste system is another face of class system with no social or occupational mobility. In the present day India people are free to choose the job of their choice but still the caste in to which they are born forms part of their identity.

The autobiographical works of Madhavikkutty mentioned above reflect this typical social structure that prevailed in Kerala at that time. It was chiefly a many-tiered society, which was patterned as follows: the *Brahmins* or the

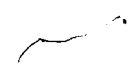
priestly class occupied the highest rung; the *Kshatriyas* or the ruling class came just below it, the *Vaishyas* constituted the trading class, and the *nairs* and *thiyyas* formed the *Sudra* class and *vettuvass*, *pulayas*, *parayas*, and the *nayadis* coming below them. Menial work was mostly carried out by the lower categories, which were called by the unthinking society as untouchables. They were classified in to various sub categories as mentioned above, based on the kind of work done by them. They were in fact treated as less than human beings and were forbidden even to touch the other classes. The *nayadis* were not even permitted to enter the courtyard of houses; they could only cry aloud from a distance begging for food or other requirements. Madhavikkutty's works *VM*, *BKS* and *NPK* vividly present the joint family system of those days; the servants of various castes who assisted the Nalappat household in their daily chores along with other workmen like the goldsmith and the carpenter complete the picture of the thoroughly knit social fabric. The linguistic expressions of the workers of the upper and lower strata, set alongside those of the members of the Nalappat family provide ample scope for a consideration along the lines of study done by Basil Bernstein, the British sociologist.

That social class has a bearing on speech behaviour has been recognized for a long time. Among the first to discuss this issue were Fischer (1958), on the linguistic side and Bernstein (1960), on the sociological side. Bernstein who has made an in-depth study of linguistically regulated

communication views language as something which influences culture and is in turn influenced by culture. The work of Bernstein is of considerable interest in terms of varieties of language. The perspective adopted by Bernstein is this: A child growing up in a certain linguistic environment and culture learns that language and culture which in turn, is passed on to the next generation; it is a direct and reciprocal relationship between a particular kind of social structure, in its establishment and maintenance, and the way people in that social structure use language. Bernstein sees the relationship as a continuing one in that it is handed down from generation to generation. A particular social structure gives birth to a particular kind of linguistic behaviour, which in turn produces the original structure.

Bernstein noticed that individuals learn their social roles through the process of communication. This process of socialization differs from social group to social group and this is a topic that has gained the attention of sociologists and linguists alike. The best-known ideas of Bernstein have revolved around the notions of the use of *restricted* and *elaborated* codes of language used. In his view:

[---] it will be argued that a number of fashions of speaking, frames of consistency are possible in any given language and that these fashions of speaking, linguistic forms or codes are themselves a function of the form social relations take.



According to this view, the form of social relation or -more generally – the social structure generates distinct linguistic forms or codes and that these codes essentially transmit the culture and so constrain behaviour. The thesis is that any one language can afford a speaker a number of different ways of using the language-there are a number of ‘fashions of speaking’. Which ‘fashion’ a speaker adopts is likely to be decided mainly by his social experiences, but in turn his fashion of speaking determines his social relationships to other speakers and to objects. His social behaviour is constrained within the limits set by his linguistic behaviour, which is in its turn constrained by his social experience. (Wallwork 111-12)

A child growing up in a certain linguistic environment and culture learns that language and culture which, in turn is passed on to the next generation. It is a direct and reciprocal relationship between a particular kind of social structure, in its establishment and maintenance, and the way people in that social structure use language. A child who has access, probably because of favourable home environment, to many different fashions of speaking will therefore be able to operate in many more contexts and with greater freedom and success than the child who has access only to a limited number of such speech systems. Of such different speech systems, or linguistic codes, Bernstein distinguishes two general types - restricted

(originally public code) and elaborated (originally formal code). The possessor of an elaborate code is seen to be more mobile, less tied to his immediate communicative situation, more able to generalize and the like more than a user of the restricted code. The restricted code user is limited to the meanings implicit in the immediate situation and he articulates these allusively, using many pronouns and other pro-forms such as 'thing', 'stuff', 'do', 'get' etc.

In Roger Fowler's words:

The elaborated code promotes mobility, individuality, authority; the restricted code blocks these kinds of socio-economic advantage. On the cognitive side, the elaborated code is claimed to give access to universalistic or transcendent meanings, whereas the restricted code limits its possessors to particularistic aspects of immediate contexts. (117)

According to Bernstein, the class system has deeply marked the distribution of knowledge within the society. The feudalistic Britain as well as Kerala of Kamala Das's days was marked by deep inequalities in the distribution of wealth, which has affected the distribution of knowledge also. According to Bernstein in those days:

A tiny percentage of the population has been given access to the principles of intellectual change whereas the rest have been

denied such an access. This suggests that we might be able to distinguish between two orders of meaning. One we could call universalistic, the other particularistic. Universalistic meanings are those in which principles and operations are made linguistically explicit whereas particularistic orders of meaning are meanings in which principles and operation are relatively linguistically implicit. If orders of meaning are universalistic, then the meanings are less tied to a given context. Where orders of meaning are particularistic, where principles are linguistically implicit, then such meanings are less context independent and more context bound. That is tied to a local relationship and to a local social structure. Where the meaning system is particularistic, much of the meaning is embedded in the context and may be restricted to those who share a similar contextual history. Where meanings are universalistic, they are in principle available to all because the principles and operations have been made explicit and so public. (163-64)

Bernstein argues that forms of socialization orient the child towards speech codes, which control access to relatively context-tied or relatively context- independent meanings. Thus, he is of the view that elaborated codes orient their users towards universalistic meanings, whereas restricted codes orient, sensitize, their users to particularistic meanings: that the linguistic

realization of the two orders are different, and so are the social relationships which realize them. In the case of elaborated codes the speech is freed from its evoking social structure and takes on an autonomy. Restricted codes are more tied to a local social structure and have a reduced potential for change in principle. One of the effects of class system is to limit access to elaborated codes. When codes are elaborated, the socialized has more access to the grounds of his own socialization, and so can enter in to a reflexive relationship to the social order he has taken over.

This is how Wardhaugh describes them, based on his study of Bernstein:

[---], these codes have very different characteristics. For example, elaborated code makes use of accurate grammatical order and syntax to regulate what is said; uses complex sentences that employ a range of devices for conjunction and subordination; employs prepositions to show relationships of a temporal and logical nature; shows frequent use of the remarks to be qualified; and according to Bernstein (169), 'is a language use which points to the possibilities inherent in a complex, conceptual hierarchy for the organizing of experience.' In contrast, restricted code employs short, grammatically simple and unfinished sentences of poor syntactic form. [---], makes

frequent appeals to 'sympathetic circularity', e.g., You know? uses idioms frequently and is ' a language of implicit meaning'.(327)

But in spite of all the linguistic disadvantages that the lower working class children suffer from, they do possess certain advantages by way of lack of any inhibitions regarding their role-playing. The children of the higher classes want to know of rules before they engage in an activity. The higher classes represented in Madhavikkutty's memoirs speak mostly short sentences, and finish their talk without much stretching them for fear of saying unnecessary things or wrong things. They are always conscious of their position in society and treat it as beneath their dignity to talk too many things at a stretch uninhibitedly. But the lower classes are not bound by any such fears- they speak mostly context-based matters and take pains to know every aspect of those things. They are the least bothered about linguistic perfection or accuracy. As a result users of the restricted code are found to be quite verbal as they are unconcerned about the impression they make on others. Madhavikkutty expresses the fact in simple words in her *Diarykkurippukal* thus:

A hundred times I tell myself thus: No, Kamala, you don't have the right to be sentimental. The right to become sentimental belongs to the poor-those who buy the lowest class ticket in the

theatres. It belongs to those who are able to laugh aloud and cry aloud.¹ (15)

According to Bernstein all speakers of a language have access to the restricted code because everybody makes use of this code on certain occasions. The restricted code serves on occasions when the language of intimacy is used between familiar or close relationships. But all social classes do not have access to the elaborated code. Bernstein saw the British social class system as responsible for the linguistic limitation of the lower working class. But linguists like Labov were critical of Bernstein's contentions. Labov's argument is that the range of devices found in a particular variety of language is not as important as the way in which speaker's actually use the devices which exist in it.

Bernstein's study has much relevance in the context of the social set up presented by Madhavikkutty in many of her works. VM, BKS, and NPK are the major works set against her family background and covering roughly the third and fourth decades of the twentieth century. The families of both her father and mother belonged to the same place Punnayurkulam coming under the present Thrissur district and erstwhile Malabar. The educated parents and the other elders of the household were always careful to inculcate in young Kamala, lady-like manners and language befitting women of noble families. In all the above-mentioned works, she mentions her father, mother and the

grandparents frequently, but their utterances are mostly brief and to the point and touches upon more serious topics compared to that of the lower classes. She who learns to talk in the elaborated code, very well fits in the company of the subordinates and the lower classes who make use of the restricted code only. Kamala who keenly observes them and tries to acquire their vocabulary and manners of speaking, sees it as an instrument of solidarity with them and a medium of intimacy with them. Bernstein is of the view that elaborated codes orient their users towards universalistic meanings, whereas restricted codes orient, sensitize their users towards particularistic meanings. At the same time elaborated code, which favours abstract discourse and universalistic meanings, also encourage vacuousness, impersonality and alienation.

Going through Madhavikkutty's memoirs, it strikes even a casual reader that her father's words are authoritative and convey universalistic meanings; but they verge on alienation and impersonality. But the servants talk in long stretches and their descriptions related to the immediate contexts are mostly verbal pictures. The young Kamala who craves for a silk frock tells her amamma:

“ I want a red silk frock definitely.”²

The servant Sankaran fully identifies with the girl's sentiments and responds thus:

“After all it is a small girl. I am disheartened to see this small one going to school wearing such old-fashioned loose frock not suiting it at all. Can’t you see other children wearing such nice frocks? Have you ever seen any girl from Ambazhathel (a neighbouring house) wearing such old-fashioned frocks? Our little girl will look nice in good frocks. This stupid tailor knows how to stitch well. He makes good frocks for other people. He thinks any thing will be sufficient for our little girl.”

Ammamma tells the tailor:

“Kumaran, please make it smaller in size to suit her physique.”

The tailor Kumaran makes his stand clear and explains the matter thus:

“Silk material is available at Kunnankulam also. I bought a golden coloured one with stripes for Kumaran doctor’s family. I took it to his house at the beach. They liked it very much and gave me the amount of money I asked for. The doctor has a daughter and a sister – Remya and Devaki. I stitched skirt and blouse for both of them. [---]. Here nobody seems to be interested in silk. That is why I never bring it here. I thought the girl here uses only khaddar material. I thought everybody here belongs to the congress party.”

Ammamma instead of explaining things throws in a brief remark:

“What Congress? Such things mean nothing for small children. It is a long time since she has been craving to get a silk frock.”

Kamala’s father who enters the scene gives the final verdict, and ends the talk in a very detached tone, highly philosophical and impersonal:

“Aye, aye, aye.* Disgraceful. Whose daughter are you? Learn from your mother. Have you ever seen your mother wearing silk sarees? You must never desire for showy things.”³(VM41-43)

Kamala’s maternal home, which she used to visit frequently and she was very fond of, is a typical ‘tharavad’^{**} of the nair community. Nalappat house occupied a high status in the locality for many reasons. Kamala’s granduncle, Nalappat Narayana Menon, was a well-known figure in the literary circles of Kerala. It was a rich and prosperous family with many educated members (the wealth had begun to decline by the time Kamala was born). Kamala’s grandmother and great grandmother had been married to members of the higher Kshatriya class. As per the existing custom it was a great fortune which nair families looked forward to; but many girls came back from their husband’s Kovilakam^{***} after a brief stay for they often felt

* ‘Aye’ – an expression of disapproval

** The ancestral home where many members used to live under the supervision of the eldest male member

*** House of the Kshatriya people.

uncomfortable there. But the *nair* girl was always welcome back at her 'tharavad'.

In *BKS* Madhavikkutty recollects her first experience of having a taste of the caste system that existed in her days and was followed meticulously by all members irrespective of their financial status. She recollects:

I still remember very well the day when ammamma first took me to the kovilakam. It was on that day that I learned my first lesson on caste difference. [...], ammamma said that we don't have the right to touch them. [...].If we touch amma thampuran, she has to dip in the pond and take bath. We are *nairs* and so if we touch them they turn impure. ⁴ (trans.9- 11)

In those days politeness was a very important principle in language use. It was observed strictly as a social norm; it was unidirectional; it operated from the lower to the higher strata and never the other way. Language contained within it certain devices which the language users had to follow strictly as they were inevitably tied up with the prevailing social structure.

Terms of address and communicative gestures varied to a very great extent from one caste to another. The Brahmins and Kshatriyas would not talk to the members of the *nair* community on an equal basis (this had changed slightly in Kamala's days especially with the educated and the affluent ones but still they would not touch them or live in their midst). The mother of the

kshatriya family was addressed by other castes as *ammathampuran* and the master and mistress of the *nair* tharavad were called by all other lower castes as *thampuran* and *thampuratti*. People belonging to various castes rendered services at the Nalappat household and their land; but only the nairs were appointed as cooks and the caretakers. Men and women belonging to the *nair* caste, even if they were of the working class, were not to be addressed on equal terms by the *thiyyas* and workers of other castes. They had to be addressed as *kammal* and *amral* respectively. The lower classes could not use the pronoun 'njaan' (respectable form of I) while talking to the higher classes; instead it had to be the humble form 'adiyan' (a word indicating the inferior status of the speaker and his/her subservience to the addressee). Once, while ammamma was serving food Kamala told her, "adiyan does not need pappads." Ammamma burst in to laughter and told her not to repeat it. Kamala should say 'njaan', to which Kamala replies thus: "Doesn't Valli say 'adiyan'? Ammamma justifies it thus: Valli is "*theeyathi*, no? Kamala is not a *theeyathi*."⁵ (BKS11) The *thiyyas* and castes coming below them never addressed the *nair* women by the usual pronouns 'nii' or 'ningal'. Instead they chose titles like 'thampuratty,' 'amral' etc designating their caste based or role based status. In the words of Hudson:

Speech may also reflect the social relations between the speaker and addressee, most particularly the power and solidarity

manifested in their relationship. Power is self-explanatory, but solidarity is harder to define. It concerns the social distance between people- how much experience they have shared, how many social characteristics they share (religion, sex, age, region of origin, race, occupation, interests etc), how far they are prepared to share intimacies and other factors. (122)

Padmavathi, the menial worker who belongs to a much lower class tells Devaki, the household assistant, who is a nair woman,

“After all we are Chaliars,* amral! Shouldn’t we consider our religion and caste?”

Sankaran and Devaki, the chief servants of the family, at the time of the period mentioned as the beginning of *VM*, since they belong to the nair caste assume an air of authority over the other servants. Their supremacy, by way of being born in the nair caste is slightly offset by their code in which many words show marked deviations from the ones used by the learned people. The following is a list of some of the words used differently by members of the Nalappat family and the servants.⁶

ammamma’s code

servants’ code

ningal

ingal (second person plural or honorific singular)

* One of the lower classes of those days.

<i>njaan, ente</i>	<i>njaayente</i> (first person singular)
<i>enikke</i>	<i>iykke</i> (first person singular, dative case)
<i>ente</i>	<i>inte</i> (first person singular, genitive case)
<i>bomb</i>	<i>vombe</i> (bomb)
<i>bharya</i>	<i>varya</i> (wife)
<i>ivide</i>	<i>ibade</i> (here)
<i>Sankaran</i>	<i>Chankaran</i> (a personal name)
<i>munpilathe</i>	<i>numbilthe</i> (of the front)

Compared to Sankaran's language, unique in many respects, Valli's shows even more marked deviations as she is a *thiyyathi* and one step lower by way of caste in the social system of Kamala's childhood days. She pronounces her own children's names wrongly as *Raahavan* and *Pravaharan* instead of *Raaghavan* and *Prabhaakaran*. Peter Trudgill comments on the same thus:

[---] value judgments concerning the correctness and purity of linguistic varieties are *social* rather than linguistic. There is nothing at all inherent in nonstandard varieties, which makes them inferior. Any apparent inferiority is due only to their association with speakers from under-privileged, low status groups. In other words, attitudes towards non-standard dialects are attitudes, which reflect the social structure of society. In the

same way, societal values may also be reflected in judgments concerning linguistic varieties. (8)

Madhavikkutti in *BKS* remembers one incident of her childhood days when a korathi,* a young woman came to Nalappat house. Kamala, and a servant kept talking to her for some time; if the servant wanted the woman to read her hand, Kamala's interest was in knowing about the palm reader and her whereabouts. The servant Lakshmi is shocked to hear Kamala asking her the name. The servant makes a categorical statement that the palm reading class of women have no names; they are in general known as just 'korathi'. She tries to argue it out with Kamala in such an emphatic way as though it is a sin even to imagine that 'korathi' category of women can have their own names. The logic behind the argument was that such women needed no names as they have no individuality and their role is just telling fortunes of others and are supposed to live hidden lives. In fact giving a name to a child is one of the first linguistic gestures of the society intended as a step towards his/her socialization and establishment of identity. Madhavikkutty has mentioned this incident to highlight the severity of injustice practiced in the Kerala society where one class of people had special titles by which they had to be addressed by others, whereas another class was not eligible even to have a name or home. Denying a name is one of the best and sure methods to strip a

* a woman belonging to 'kurava', a low caste that made their living by reading palms.

person of his identity, take away his/her self-confidence and block his/her onward progress.

In fact any society is the product of a long social process, taking place over a long period of time. During this process the society evolves for better living conditions for some and worse for some others. This evolution is more in the direction of progress and rarely backward. Generally, two kinds of social mobility are noticed: 1) upward mobility and 2) downward mobility. The under privileged people of Madhavikkutty's childhood days definitely exhibit an upward mobility and have attained much more than they possessed earlier. The sixteen-year-old boy, son of Mathuamma in the story "Prabhatham" is a totally broken child and his ire is upon all the higher castes for they have deprived him of the blessings of the world. To the young Amy, he is a mystery and she can only wonder why he should want to kill her. But the grown up Kamala is only too happy with the social changes taking place around her. She records that the one time poor and the suffering ones of her days, probably, out of their desire to take vengeance on their cruel masters went out of the country and came back rich enough to buy the property and riches owned by them. The changes brought about by their affluence and education has in turn, changed their language too. Since language is a part of the human behaviour, language varies along with variations in human behaviour. The lower castes of Kamala's days never used to say the dignified form of 'I' ('njaan') while talking to the higher castes; but this has changed

completely and their language in the present day is free from traces of any kind of a lower status.

Kinship Systems

People use language for a variety of purposes and one of them is to refer to various kinds of kin. Wardhaugh comments on the same thus:

[---], there is a considerable literature on kinship terminology, describing how people in various parts of the world refer to relatives by blood (or descent) and marriage. Kinship systems are a universal feature of languages, because kinship is so important in social organization. Some systems are much richer than others, but all make use of such factors as sex, age, generation, blood, and marriage in their organization. (223)

The kinship terminology of certain cultures very much reflects its social set up or family structure. Kamala Das, in her autobiographical works uses many number of kinship terms, reflecting the importance those relations held in her life. The most striking thing regarding the kinship terminology presented by Kamala Das is that it is embedded in the matrilineal family set up of the nair community of Kerala of those days, especially of the Malabar region. The nair community, which followed the matrilineal pattern of inheritance, assigned a rightful place in the family for the married women also. Regarding her relationships of the paternal side, in fact there is hardly

any mention of the same. In fact, she belonged more to her mother's family than to her father's or husband's. All the kinship terms that Kamala repeatedly mentions are all relationships through the mother. Kamala was closest to her ammamma (amma-mother, amma + amma- mother's mother); the young Kamala's parents who lived in Calcutta had entrusted the child to her ammamma who, according to the prevailing custom, was the rightful custodian, next to the mother. The father's role was vague in the matrilineal system as 'ammavan' (mother's brother or uncle) was the head of the family. A man's responsibilities were more towards his sisters and their children. But Kamala's father, being educated and reformist by nature was not strictly tied down to customs; he himself took charge of his children's upbringing; only when Calcutta turned riotous due to world war he sent them to their mother's house.

The other people in Nalappat household close to Kamla's heart are valiammavan (mother's ammavan or grand uncle) valiamma (his mother) muthassi (ammamma's mother or great grand mother) and cheriamma (mother's younger sister).

Kamala Das mentions about her relatives of the father's and husband's side; but according to the prevailing custom she hardly got much opportunities to live with them or be close to them like she was with those of the mother's side. She refers to her father's brother without any specific

kinship term. It's just father's brother, Appuvettan. (BKS108). She doesn't mention any specific kinship terms regarding her relationships by marriage also. There is no role-based term of address for the husband's mother also. Everybody at home and in the neighbourhood called her as *cheriyoppu* and Kamala simply mentions her as husband's mother.

Thus it can be observed that the kinship system followed by the nair community of those days was generation oriented and age oriented with different patterns of address for the maternal and paternal sides.

The social and physical environment

Descriptions of the physical and social environment abound in all the three above-mentioned works of Madhavikkutty. Similar to kinship terminology, there are certain other classifications that form the basis of language and society. In language itself there are various kinds of classifications like vowels and consonants, transitive verbs and intransitive verbs, questions and answers and the like. In the same way people make use of language to classify and categorize various aspects of the world in which they live. Linguists call such classifications as folk taxonomies. In the words of Wardhaugh:

A folk taxonomy is a way of classifying a certain part of reality so that it makes some kind of sense to those who have to deal with it. Typically, such taxonomies involve matters like

naturally occurring flora and fauna in the environment, but they may involve other matters too (227).

There is a study of folk taxonomy in Frake's account of the terms related to the diseases that are commonly found among the Subanun race of Southern Philippines. The Subanun race suffers from a large number of diseases, especially skin diseases. Treatment depends, to a large extent, on proper diagnosis, which in turn depends on recognizing the symptoms. In the naming of symptoms, a variety of terms are used to indicate minor variations of the disease. It can be observed that the success of treatment of the disease depends not only on its therapeutic value but also on the validity of the system of classification for diseases. It is a folk system and not a scientific one. (Wardhaugh 227)

A similar description of plants and trees and animals and certain superstitions associated with the daily life of the people of those days is seen throughout Kamala Das's works wherein memories of childhood and the Nalappat household form the main stream of thought. She names a large number of trees, which are in fact part of the every day life of the members of the Nalappat house. The readers get transported to an exotic world of rustic beauty – a place where men and women, plants and animals live in harmony and mutual understanding. Recreating the scenic beauty is not all that the author intends; had it been so, figurative language would serve the purpose.

She does intend to name them one by one and make the readers familiar with the rich natural wealth of the family that distinguished it and made it a unique place. At the beginning of *NPK*, Madhavikkutty recollects that it is the wealth of trees that gave Nalappat and its surroundings the grandeur it possesses. She writes:

It was a plain house built as a 'nalukettu'* It took on elegance and grandeur as trees grew around it. Near the fence grew 'mulankadukal', 'kallichedikal', 'murukku', 'erukku', 'poovarassu', and 'vaaka'. On the bank of the pond was grown 'cheeru' trees to scare away the loafers interested in watching women bathe(standing near it made their bodies itch severely).On the eastern side of the vast land grew trees like 'koovalakam', 'vadukappuli narakam', 'eenthanpana', 'karimpana',and 'kavungu' ; on the southern side 'puliyan maavu', 'njaaval' ; at the snake-shrine 'kaanjiram', 'ilanji', 'pari', 'neermathalam', 'kumkumam' tree etc; on the northern side 'plassu', 'nelli', huge 'mango trees' bearing juicy yellow mangoes, other mango trees, and plantains in large numbers; on the western side 'moovandan' mangotrees, 'mathala narakam', and kariveppu; near the fence sweet smelling 'paala',

* Quadrangle with inner courtyard which was the traditional residence of the high class nair families.

‘paarijatham’, ‘pavizhamalli’, ‘aavanakku’, and ‘ilavangam’⁷ (NPK7).^{*} In fact such a detailed listing of names cannot come from someone other than a close observer of nature who has taken pains to study them and keep them close to the heart.

My Story hovers around a lot many themes; but in between her memories take refuge under the lush green atmosphere of Nalappat. This is how she describes her home:

Let's go to Nalappat house. On the left side there were two ‘vadukappuli naraka’ trees where green whipsnakes hide. Left to it there was a ‘plaasu’ tree; then the cattle shed where there were three cows including my cheriamma's favourite ‘nandini’. There was ‘nelli’ tree, ‘parijatham’ which raised its hands towards the sky, ‘kaanjiram’, the old monster at the snake-shrine, ‘ilanji’, ‘thippali’ which has spread on the ‘ilanji’, the caverns where the water fowl live, the banks of the pond where alligators take rest with open mouths. In the front there is the rose garden reared by ‘ammavan’; there is the mango tree on the south whose fruits are eaten by crows and squirrels only; the ‘puliyaaral’ plant growing near the wall and the stepping

^{*} Different types of trees and plants like bamboo, cactus, jack fruit tree etc.

stone.....these constituted the Nalappat house of those days.⁸(Ente Katha22)

Although Kamala's descriptions are mostly in plain language, she resorts to ornamental language when it comes to describing the flora and fauna around her. In chapter seven of *NPK*, she turns most mellifluous trying to evoke the sense of smell upon the readers; it is done making use of the figure of speech *Synaesthesia** For Madhavikkutty:

The smell of 'neermathalam' flowers is very much like the gentle song that comes with the wind. The smell of the 'neermathalam flowers' was the lullaby of the mother. How many times at night have I released myself from my mother's clasp and run to the window – to have one more sight of the 'neermathalam' in its full bloom. As each wind blew from the snake-shrine , the whiteness of the 'neermathalam', thinner than moonlight, shivered like a girl who has finished her bath on 'thiruvaathira'** (NPK33)⁹

* Figure of speech, which evokes one kind of sensory perception using sensory descriptions of another kind.

** A Kerala festival during which girls and women observe rituals to propitiate Goddess Parvathi and Lord Shiva.

She adds:

Other flowers may have the smell of drumbeat or the reverberation of the 'veena' (an Indian musical instrument of the string type). For e.g., 'chembaka' flower. Its smell is like 'thayambaka' (a group of percussion instruments played together). The scent of rose flowers reminds one of veena. parijatham- the times when the tree stood erect braving the heat and bowed down in the rain- didn't it raise music when it bloomed. Didn't the pavizhamalli on the yard of mattam house give rise to the sound of 'jaltharang'¹⁰ (a musical instrument).(NPK33)

She continues:

The smell of Punnayurkulam of my childhood days was extremely beautiful. The paddy fields full of ripe mature paddy bore not only the smell of paddy; they had the smell of sunlight as well. The southeast winds gifted us with the smell of bamboo groves, of cobras hidden in them, of yellow 'arali' flowers on the sides of the sandy path leading to the sea, of 'kolambi' flowers, of the sea, of dry fish, and the fishing nets and the like. The northeastern winds came to us carrying the smell of

‘puncha’ paddy (harvested in summer time) and drying coconut and coconut oil.

Today? Those times when Punnayurkulam could be distinguished by its smell are over. Today it has the smell of cement, petrol, and drugs which the government employees spray in gutters to kill mosquitoes.¹¹ (trans.31-32 NPK).

Any number of examples are available in Madhavikkutty’s works that illustrate her unusually strong bonds with nature, especially plants and animals. Madhavikkutty who begins her early literary life with her poetic compositions, had already absorbed the ‘gulmohar’ tree with its bright red flowers in to her being; it came to represent her deep desires or strong emotions. Gradually, the ‘gulmohar’ gave way to the ‘neermathalam’ with its tender flowers of gentle smell. Probably, this transformation reflects the emotional maturity that gradually comes over people. Any way, the ‘gulmohar’, ‘neermathalam’, and many such flowers and trees form a living presence in the works of Kamala Das, which emphasize how far she and her art are close to nature. As Asha Menon comments, “Only one meaning need to be attributed to relating literature with the plant world. Art is not just something to do with the humans, although it is conquered by man. It is the presence of the flora and fauna in art that takes it close to nature”.¹²

(Malayalam Weekly 2 June 2006)

In fact, her memory works are a going back to nature; this is possible only for a mind that has been sustained by the throbbings of the nature- by the plants and animals and rustic people- who made her childhood a rich feast for her imagination and emotions.

Linguistic Taboo

Linguistic taboo is a very important topic in sociolinguistics. Wardhaugh explains the term in the following manner:

Language is used to avoid saying certain things as well as to express them. Certain things are not said, not because they cannot be, but because people don't talk about those things; or if, those things are talked about, they are talked about in very round about ways. In the first case we have instances of linguistic taboo; in the second we have the employment of euphemisms so as to avoid mentioning certain matters directly.

(234)

Taboo is generally practised because the utterance of certain words is believed to be harmful to the members of a particular society, for it might cause them anxiety, shame or embarrassment. In fact taboo restrictions vary with the context, and with the user. There are people who are prepared to break linguistic taboos because they do not in any way justify such social constraints and they want to express their freedom. People are seen to violate

linguistic taboos to draw attention to themselves or to show contempt or to be aggressive or provocative or to mock authority. Tabooed words are mostly those related to sex, excretion, death, bodily functions, religious matters, and politics. Sometimes language taboos arise from bilingual situations where an untattooed word in one language bears phonetic resemblance to a tabooed word in the other language.

Kamala makes her characters her mouthpiece to break all linguistic taboos associated with the culture of Kerala. No woman writer in Kerala, before her times or even now has dared to write like her. Not only women but men also in Kerala have not written so boldly about the nature and needs of the female mind and body. If women have not done so out of fear of the society or taboo restrictions existing in the society, men probably do not treat it as a worthwhile topic or fear that presenting such themes in literature might gradually lead to creating greater awareness in the society in favour of women folk. Kamala Das talks of all aspects of love and sex hitherto untouched by other women writers in the country. There are plain references to procreative and excretory organs of the human body in some of her writings. She writes in uninhibited language about love and sex. The lover in the story "Pattangal" (MKS220-27) is quite sure that his ladylove commits adultery when she sleeps with her husband; she belongs to him in mind and body and so he is her real partner. She uses no euphemisms when it comes to matters related to death or sex. Kamala who equates sex with innocence

makes a sincere revelation about members of her family thus, "The women of the best nair families never mentioned sex. It was their principal phobia"(*My Story* 25).

Very blatantly she criticises religious practices and the blind faith exhibited by certain people in matters related to religion. Words and expressions tabooed by the Kerala community and considered as unlady-like are frequently noticed in Kamala's writings. This forms one of the reasons why she has become the target of incessant stone throwing by the society. But despite all odds Kamala's courage and enthusiasm remains unmitigated because she writes out of honesty and she believes that taboos are not just to be observed but also to be broken. And also her concept of taboo differs from that of the hypocritical world constituted by a large number of people. She reveals the same in her *DK* as follows:

Some time back, in a film broadcast by Doordarshan there was a particular scene in which a young boy of fifteen was beaten to death by a middle-aged man using a gun. Placing his face on the man's knee the boy was begging to him not to kill him. The censoring authorities gave permission to include such a scene. But they would not permit a scene where two people kiss each other out of intense love. (110)

She is able to make open statements about the evil practices found in religions because she believes that God dwells outside institutionalized religions. She equates God with the ultimate good in man, with the positive spirit omnipresent in the universe and is willing to bow before it but not before pseudo Gods or ritualized religions that have lost God in its essence. She does not consider it as blasphemy or taboo to write about the rotten practices in religions because she believes that the ultimate truth, 'God', remains outside religion and unscathed by criticism. An elaborate or close study of linguistic taboo in Kamala Das's works is not undertaken here.

Kamala Das – the multilingual

She is a writer who has established her imprint on Malayalam language and the reading public, and at the same time gained international acclaim through her original works in English and translations in to English as well as many other languages. Her proficiency in more than one language and her rising up in to fame as a successful multilingual enables her to be studied from such an angle. As Bernard Spolsky comments:

One of the central goals of the study of bilingualism is a theoretical model that will account for the bilingual's unconscious or conscious decision to use one language rather than another. If we accept that all normal speakers, even monolinguals, have similar problems in deciding which variety,

register, or style to use, the matter is of wider theoretical interest. (105)

Multilingualism in a very narrow sense refers to an individual making use of more than one language. But it is not always so because a single language itself can be a set of codes. One of the far-reaching consequences of the great strides made in the field of sociolinguistics is the abandoning of the notion of language as a monolith. Now that the social dimension of language has been established, language is viewed by linguists as a collection of codes and no more as a homogeneous object. All language users choose from the bundle of codes to satisfy their social needs of communication with different people. Most individuals, however introvert they may be, play more than one role, take part in many social relationships and willy- nilly belong to more than one single group. Individuals need to use more than one code to carry out the different roles they are supposed to play—thus it is seen that code-switching is just the linguistic correlate of role-switching. Roger. T. Bell views the situation thus:

In place of the view of language as a homogeneous object, we must put forward some notion of language as a set of role-related, and in part role- defining, codes, grouped together as the repertoire of an individual, the combined repertoires of a group and perhaps as the sets of repertoires of formally or functionally

related languages. In short, the individual user is to be seen as a chooser amongst codes and it little matters, in terms of pure description, whether the codes are styles, dialects or what are normally thought of as autonomous languages, since any or all of these can be involved in the code-switching behaviour of the language user. [---] it will be clear that the difference between intra- and inter- language switching is only one of degree and not of kind and that the notion of bilingualism is no more than special case of such switching. (110-111)

Since, even style shifting within the same idiolect has come to be considered under the broad term, *multilingualism*, Kamala Das's language needs to be examined from various angles, for she not only spoke and wrote in two languages but also switched over from one style to another. As a pre-requisite to evaluating her as a bilingual, it is important to look at some of the terminology involved, like 'mother tongue' and 'foreign tongue' or 'first' and 'second language'. In the case of most individuals, mother tongue is the first language learned, and it is also the most used. Second language tends to be 'secondary' or auxiliary in terms of use. But in the case of Kamala, as with many other individuals, such a distinction cannot be made.

Kamala having been brought up in Calcutta of the colonial days, and educated at St. Cecilia's, a European school and forced to continue city life

after marriage, it is only natural that she resorted to English language as the medium of her creative out-put. In the case of Kamala, one cannot even authoritatively say that Malayalam is her first language. She was better exposed to the English language and circumstances were such that she became proficient in that language at an early age. Initially, her familiarity with the Malayalam language was confined to the domain of her home and hearth. As she recollects in *Ente Katha*, "Those days, we felt, Malayalam language had the colour and inferiority complex of Nambiar. The aim of my brother and myself was to excel even the English children in English language. Quite often we became successful in our attempts."¹³ (trans.16)

It is in fact; her brief sojourns at her mother's house in the presence of her maternal uncle, Nalappat Narayana Menon, a well-known scholar of those days that gradually took her closer to standard Malayalam and Malayalam literature. Quite often there were debates in the house on various subjects participated by known literary men, advocates, diplomats, doctors and astrologers and the young Kamala was eager to listen to them. Kuttikrishna Marar, one of the greatest critics of Malayalam literature those days used to visit Nalappat house often. Kamala remembers telling her grand uncle of her desire to learn Malayalam language properly. It was by reading the book *Malayala Saili* gifted by Marar that she gained mastery over the language.

Her association with the household servants and eagerness to listen to their conversation was another factor that spurred her inborn affinity for the Malayalam language and culture. Kamala understood that cut off from the Malayalam language and its culture she had no existence. She began to love every aspect of it and chose a new role - that of Madhavikkutty.

In the poem “An Introduction”, She confesses thus:

[---], I am Indian, very brown, born in
 Malabar, I speak three languages, write in
 Two, dream in one. Don't write in English, they said,
 English is not your mother tongue. Why not
 Leave me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,
 Every one of you? Why not let me speak in
 Any language I like? The language I speak
 Becomes mine, its distortions, its queerness,
 All mine, mine alone. It is half English, half
 Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest,
 It is as human as I am human, don't
 You see?

In the same poem, which is in the form of an introduction of the author, she adds:

Be Amy, or be Kamala. Or, better

Still be Madhavikkutty. It is time

Choose a name, a role.

In Kamala's case it has to be presumed that choosing a language had more to do with choosing a role or a name. The name *Kamala* and the language English, she might have found them to be handier and convenient for the readers of the metro cities with whom she had more associations initially. But later she must have found that only through Malayalam language she can present the essence of the familiar surroundings and her birthplace.

Language and Socialization

Basil Bernstein who spent much of his time learning about the socialization process undergone by children viewed it thus:

I shall take the term to refer to the process whereby a child acquires a specific cultural identity, and to his responses to such an identity. Socialization refers to the process whereby the biological is transformed in to a specific cultural being. It follows from this that the process of socialization is a complex process of control, whereby a particular moral, cognitive and affective awareness is evoked in the child and given a specific form and content. Socialization sensitizes the child to various

orderings of society, as these are made substantive in the various roles he is expected to play. (162)

Language serves as a very important tool in socialization. Interpretation of this world is based on a stock of previous experience of it handed down to individuals by parents and teachers. This, together with one's own experience gradually equips the young person to be part of the society in which he has to live. Socialization refers to 1) an individual imbibing the culture of the society in which he lives. 2) the process of becoming human or acquiring human attributes from others. In the process of socialization and the acquisition of social rules and linguistic rules many agents play their roles. The family is the first and foremost agent in the socialization of an individual. Socialization differs from one individual to another, depending on the social class to which a particular family belongs. The other agencies of socialization in contemporary societies are the peer group, school and work.

The older generation makes use of language to transmit its culture to a younger one- thus speech serves as an instrument of socialization. Much of the process of socialization is completed by the time an individual becomes an adult. The values that the child has imbibed is part of the type of socialization he has undergone. Basil Bernstein is of the view that the socialization of the young children in the family proceeds within a set of interrelated contexts and he distinguishes them in to four contexts. Bernstein's theory has been

substantiated with suitable examples from various texts of Madhavikkutty.

- 1) The regulative context- these are authority relationships where the child is made aware of the rules of the moral order and their various backing.

"Ammamma advises Kamala thus: "You should not have excessive desire for anything. When you feel it so, you should learn to exercise restraint on your mind."¹⁴(VM19)

- 2) The instructional context, where the child learns about the objective nature of objects and persons, and learns skills of various kinds.

"I learned to collect flowers in flower baskets and make floral carpets out of them for Onam* celebrations. I also learned to propitiate Goddess Laksmi, give alms to the beggars, and receive the temple deity with the full bushel, flower bouquet, and lighted lamp".¹⁵

- 3) The imaginative or innovating contexts, where the child is encouraged to experiment and re-create his world on his own terms, and in his own way.

As a young girl Kamala used to experiment with poetry two such lines were the following:

* One of the most important festivals of Kerala celebrated in the first month of the Malayalam calendar during harvest season.

Wipe out of the paints unmould the day

Let nothing remain of that yesterday

"On the very next day I sent the poem to be published in the magazine run by P.E.N. Since that day my sorrow flew upon the pages of magazines like clouds"¹⁶ (*Ente Katha* 78).

- 4) The interpersonal context, where the child is made aware of affective states-his own, and others.

Kamala mentions about her school in Calcutta thus:

"It is in that school that I first experienced the cruel intensity of racial discrimination. The teachers of the school who used to kiss the white skinned students and carry them on their laps never even once called me near them or touch me."¹⁷ (*Ente Katha* 42).

Bernstein adds that the critical orderings of a culture or sub culture are made palpable through the forms of its linguistic realisations of these four contexts. Any numbers of examples are available from Madhavikkutty's memoirs to show how she passed through these contexts in the process of socialization .

Speech is a crucial factor in a number of social activities including socialization. Mastery over speech allows one to communicate with others at

very sophisticated levels, which would not have been possible otherwise. Speech plays many different roles in social interaction. If speech is so important in social interaction, the same must be true of writing also, because writing is an alternative way of expression of thoughts and ideas. Great writers are those who contribute to the society in different ways: 1) they hand down to the generations to come, the immense stock of experience which they and their ancestors experienced. 2) they get the readers involve themselves in the humanising process which they aim at through their writings. The socialization process undergone by an author is the essence of his writings; either he has absorbed the society's values and norms in to his self and or he is rebelling against such societal norms and replacing them with other ones which he would most willingly advocate to his readers.

In chapter I of *EnteKatha* Madhavikkutty tells the readers, "Now, I will, tell you my own story. It is the story of a simple life that ends by fighting against the established systems and against all indiscipline of life."¹⁸ (trans. 13-14)

Kamala gives a vivid account of her upbringing-the early childhood in the Calcutta home and the schooling at Calcutta and Thrissur, and the chief formative influence upon her character and personality, the Nalappat household. Both her father and mother were gentle personalities, staunch Gandhians who used to advise their children not to be conspicuous in their

dressing and speech. Kamala recollects one of her experiences at an early age when she was staying with her grand mother at Nalappat. The grandmother was quite willing to grant her long time wish of possessing a red silk frock; but her father who had come to take her back to Calcutta interfered saying, "She should not wear red-coloured dress. [---]. It is uncultured people who try to be conspicuous in their dress and behaviour."¹⁹(trans VM 43-44). As they go for a walk, her father tries to civilise Kamala:

You have become quite a village girl. Don't you know that the war has come to an end. Now I will take you to Calcutta. I will put you in a good school and make you smart. If you live with your grandmother you will become quite old-fashioned. I don't like it. You should become an accomplished lady. You should learn to talk to anybody boldly. You should never develop an inferiority complex. You should always remember that you are above other people. You are my daughter. You should never forget that.²⁰ (VM44)

Kamala remembers that her father did not like to see her talking to the servants aloud, standing on the kitchen courtyard. But she liked to talk to them and be noticed by them. Only the servants expressed their willingness to be her listeners. She worked her imagination and fabricated stories to attract their attention and retain that attention. She developed a concept of 'I' far

removed from the real 'I'. Gradually the servants started to believe that she was bold enough to control even the teachers of the school. (NPK197).

In Kamala's case, the socialization process as intended by her parents or the elderly members of the household, intended to evolve the girl in to a conservative Indian woman- dutiful wife and home-loving mother-docile and gentle –did not materialise; on the other hand the young Kamala did turn in to her line of being in constant company with the society around her, the young and old, the poor and rich, the enlightened and the mediocre, woman and man and the meanest of the mean trampled upon by others. Her means of reaching out to the masses was through her bold and highly imaginative writing style. For Kamala, it was her duty, her moral responsibility, to think of her fellow men and write for them.

Kamala's socialization and her growth in to an accomplished woman did not follow the usual traditional path; she never obeys the social norms blindly. Like all geniuses, it is not in her blood to be a conformist who toes the line drawn by others.

Chapter IV has examined in detail how Madhavikkutty's compositions, especially her prose works revolve around the society and incorporates certain sociolinguistic principles. Practically, it is impossible to detach language and society in her works that reminiscence the childhood days. The dialect differences of various castes and categories of people have been beautifully

presented by her against the background of her family fabric. So also, it strikes even a casual reader that the kinship terms followed by the 'nair' community is derived out of the matrilineal family set up followed by the members. The formative influences in the socialization of Kamala have also been examined in this chapter.

Notes

¹ നൂറു തവണ ഞാൻ തന്നത്താൻ പറയും: ഇല്ല കമലേ, സെന്റിമെന്റലാവാനുള്ള അവകാശം നിനക്കില്ല. സെന്റിമെന്റൽ ആവാനുള്ള അവകാശം വെറും പാമരർക്കുള്ളതാണ്. സിനിമാക്കോട്ടകളിൽ തറക്ലാസ് ടിക്കറ്റ് എടുക്കുന്നവർ. നിർഭയം ഉറക്കെ ചിരിക്കുവാനും ഉറക്കെ കരയുവാനും സാധിക്കുന്നവർ (ഡയറിക്കുറിപ്പുകൾ 15).

² “എനിക്കും വേണം ഒരു സിൽക്ക് ഫ്രോക്ക്,” ഞാൻ ഒരിക്കൽ പറഞ്ഞു. (വർഷങ്ങൾക്കു മുമ്പ് 41).

“അത് ഇത്തിരിപ്പോന്ന ഒരു പെക്കുട്ടി,” അയിനെ ഗോസായോൾടെ കുപ്പായോടീച്ച് ഇസ്കൂളിൽക്ക് അയയ്ക്കുമ്പോ ഇയ്ക്ക് അത് കണ്ടിട്ടാ ചങ്ക് പൊട്ട്. വാക്കിളേളാരടെ കുട്ടോള് ഇടണ പ്രാക്കോള് വെലുമ്മ കാണുന്നിലു അല്ലേ? അമ്പാഴത്തേലെ കുട്ടി എപ്പോഴെങ്കിലും ഗോസായിക്കുപ്പായം ഇട്ണ്ടാ? ഇലുലൊ? അതാ ഞാമ്പറേണ്. നൊമ്മടെ കുട്ടീം നല്ല പ്രാക്കിട്ട് നടന്നാ കാണാൻ ചേല്ണ്ടാവും. ഈ പഹേന് തുന്നാൻ നിശ്ശല്യാണ്ടെയല്ലാനേയ്. വാക്കിളേളാരടെ കുപ്പായ് തുന്നുമ്പോ നന്നാവ്ണ്ടല്ലോ. ഇബ്ടത്തെ കുട്ടിക്ക് അതൊക്കെ മതീന് ഈ പഹേന്റെ വിജാരം. . . . ” (വർഷങ്ങൾക്കു മുമ്പ് 42-43).

“കൊറച്ച് വലിപ്പം കൊറച്ചോളൊ കുമാരാ.” അമ്മമ്മ പറഞ്ഞു. (വർഷങ്ങൾക്കു മുമ്പ് 43)

“കുന്നംകൊളത്തും കിട്ടും സിൽക്കിന്റെ ശീല. സൊർണ്ണനെന്തീല വരവ
രയായിട്ടുള്ള ഒരു ശീല. ഞാൻ നൊമ്മടെ കുമാരൻ ഡോക്ടർടെ വീട്ടിലെ കൊണ്ട
ക്കൊടുത്തു, കടപ്പൊറത്തുള്ള വീട്ടിച്ചെന്ന് കൊടുത്തു. ശീല വലുതു ഇഷ്ടമായി.
ചോയിച്ച വെല തന്നുട്ടൊ. ഡോക്ടർടെ മോളുണ്ട് - രെമണി.. പെങ്ങളു് ദേവകി.
രണ്ടാൾക്കും പാവാരോം ബ്ലൗസും തുന്നിക്കൊടുത്തു (. . . .). ഇബടൊളൊർക്ക്
സിൽക്കിമ്ലൊന്നും കമ്പം കാണാറില്ല. അതോണ്ടാ സിൽക്ക് കിട്ടുമ്പൊ ഞായി
വിടെ കൊണ്ടുരാത്ത. ഇബടൊളൊർ കുട്ടി വെറും മിൽഖദറു മാത്രേ ഉപയോഗി
ക്കുന്നേ വിചാരിച്ചത്. ഇബടൊളൊർ കോൺഗ്രസ്സാനേയ് വിചാരിച്ചത് (വർഷ
ങ്ങൾക്കുമുമ്പ് 43).

“കുട്ടേളുക്ക് എന്ത് കോൺഗ്രസ്സ്? അവൾക്ക് പട്ടുകുപ്പായം വേണംന്ന്
ആഗ്രഹം തൊടങ്ങീട്ട് കാലം കുറെയായി” (വർഷങ്ങൾക്കുമുമ്പ് 43)

³ആയ്, ആയ്, ആയ്, ഡിസ്ഗ്രേസ്ഫുൾ. നീ ആരടെ കുട്ടിയാ? നിന്റെ
അമ്മയെക്കണ്ട പഠിക്ക. അമ്മ പട്ടുസാരി ഉടുക്കണത് നീ കണ്ടിട്ടുണ്ടോ ആഡംബര
ഭ്രമം നന്നല്ല. (വർഷങ്ങൾക്കുമുമ്പ് 43)

⁴അമ്മമ്മ എന്നെ ആദ്യമായി കോവിലകത്തു കൊണ്ടുപോയ ദിവസം ഞാൻ
ഇന്നും നല്ലപോലെ ഓർക്കുന്നു. ജാതിവ്യത്യാസത്തെപ്പറ്റിയുള്ള ആദ്യപാഠം
അന്നാണു ഞാൻ പഠിച്ചത് (...) അമ്മമ്മ പറഞ്ഞു. അവരെയാരേയും തൊടുവാ
നുള്ള അവകാശം ഞങ്ങൾക്കില്ലെന്ന്. അവരുടെ ജാതിയും ഞങ്ങളുടെ ജാതിയും
വ്യത്യസ്തങ്ങളായിരുന്നുവെന്നും അമ്മമ്മ പറഞ്ഞു. (ബാല്യകാലസ്മരണകൾ
9-11).

⁵ ഒരു ദിവസം പൊടിയരിക്കഞ്ഞി കുടിക്കുന്നതിനിടയിൽ പപ്പടം വിളമ്പാൻ അമ്മമ്മ തുനിഞ്ഞപ്പോൾ ഞാൻ പറഞ്ഞു.

‘അടിയന് പപ്പടം വേണ്ട?

അമ്മമ്മ പൊട്ടിച്ചിരിച്ചു.

‘കമല എന്തിനാ അടിയൻ്റെ പരേണത്? ഞാൻ പറഞ്ഞാപ്പോരെ?

‘വള്ളി പറയാറില്ലേ, അടിയൻ്റെ?

‘വള്ളി തീയുത്തിയല്ലേ? കമല തീയുത്തിയല്ലല്ലോ’ (ബാല്യകാലസ്മരണകൾ 11)

⁶ അമ്മമ്മയുടെ ഭാഷ	ജോലിക്കാരുടെ ഭാഷ
നിങ്ങൾ	ഇങ്ങൾ
ഞാൻ, എന്റെ (ഞാനെന്റെ)	ഞായെന്റെ
എനിക്ക്	ഇയ്ക്ക്
എന്റെ	ഇന്റെ
ബോംബ്	വോമ്പ്
ഭാര്യ	വാര്യ
ഇവിടെ	ഇബ്ടെ
ശങ്കരൻ	ചങ്കരൻ
മുൻപിലത്തെ	നുമ്പിൽത്തെ

രാഘവൻ, പ്രഭാകരൻ എന്നിവയ്ക്കു പകരം രാഹവൻ, പ്രവാഹരൻ.

⁷ആഡംബരമില്ലാത്ത ഒരു നാലുകെട്ട്. ആഡംബരം വന്നത് അതിന്റെ ചുറ്റും മരങ്ങൾ വളർന്നു നിന്നപ്പോഴാണ്. വേലിക്കരിക്കെ മുളങ്കാടുകൾ, കള്ളിച്ചെടികൾ, മുരുക്ക്, എരുക്ക്, പൂവരൾ, വാക, കുളക്കരയിൽ സ്ഥിതിചെയ്യുന്ന പൊന്തകളിൽ ഒളിച്ച് സ്ത്രീകൾ കുളിക്കുന്നത് ആരും നോക്കിക്കാണരുതെന്നു കരുതി വളർത്തിയ ചേർ മരങ്ങൾ (അവയുടെ അടുത്തുനിന്നാലുടനെ ആർക്കും ശരീരമാസകലം ചൊരിഞ്ഞു തുടങ്ങും). കിഴക്കേപറമ്പിൽ കുവളകം, വടുകപ്പള്ളി നാരകം, ഈന്തൻപന, കരിമ്പന, കവുങ്ങ്, തെക്കേപറമ്പിൽ പുളിയൻമാവ്, ഞാവൽ, പാമ്പിൻകാവിൽ കാഞ്ഞിരം, ഇലഞ്ഞി, പരി, നീർമാതളം, കൂങ്കുമമരം, വടക്കേപറമ്പിൽ പ്ലാശ്, നെല്ലി, നീരുവലിച്ചുകുടിക്കാനുള്ള മഞ്ഞമാങ്ങകൾ പേറുന്ന കുറ്റൻമാവ്, മറ്റു മാവുകൾ, നേന്ത്രവാഴക്കൂട്ടം, പടിഞ്ഞാറ് മുവാണ്ടൻ മാവുകൾ, മാതളനാരകം, കരിവേപ്പില, വേലിക്കൽ നറുമണമുള്ള പാല, പാരിജാതം, പവിഴമല്ലി, ആവണക്ക്, ഇലവംഗം. (നീർമാതളം പുത്തകാലം, 7).

⁸ഇടത്ത് പച്ചിലപ്പാമ്പുകളെ വഹിക്കുന്ന രണ്ട് വടുകപ്പള്ളി നാരകങ്ങൾ. അതിനും ഇടത്ത് വേലിക്കരിക്കിൽ ഓലമേഞ്ഞ തണ്ണീർപ്പന്തൽ ചാഞ്ഞുനില്ക്കുന്ന പ്ലാശുമരം. ചെറിയമ്മയുടെ ഓമനയായ ചുവന്ന നന്ദിനിയുൾപ്പെടെ മൂന്നു പശുക്കൾ താമസിച്ചിരുന്ന തൊഴുത്ത്. നെല്ലി, ആകാശത്തിലേക്കു കൈ നീട്ടിയ പാരിജാതമരം. പാമ്പിൻകാവിലെ വൃദ്ധരാക്ഷസനായ കാഞ്ഞിരം, ഇലഞ്ഞി; ഇലഞ്ഞിയിൽ പടർന്ന തിപ്പലി, കുളക്കോഴികൾ വസിക്കുന്ന പൊന്തകൾ, ചീങ്കണ്ണികൾ ഇളംവെയിലിൽ വായ് തുറന്നു വിശ്രമിക്കുന്ന കുളക്കടവുകൾ. ഉമ്മറത്ത് അമ്മാവൻ നട്ടുവളർത്തിയ പനിനീർപുന്തോട്ടം. കാക്കയും അണ്ണാനുകളും മാത്രം ഭക്ഷിക്കുന്ന പുളിയൻ മാങ്ങകളുണ്ടാവുന്ന തെക്കൻ മാവ്. ചുവരിന്റെയും ചവിട്ടുകല്ലിന്റെയും അരി

കിൽ വളർന്നുനിന്നിരുന്ന പുളിയാറൽച്ചെടി . . . ഇതൊക്കെയായിരുന്നു അക്കാലത്തെ നാലപ്പാട്ടു വീട് (എന്റെ കഥ 22)

⁹നീർമാതളപ്പൂക്കളുടെ സുഗന്ധം കാറ്റിൽ വന്നെത്തുന്ന എത്രയോ നേർത്ത ഒരു ഗാനശകലം പോലെയാണ്. (നീർമാതളം പുത്തകാലം 33).

നീർമാതളപ്പൂക്കളുടെ മണം അമ്മയുടെ താരാട്ടായിരുന്നു. രാത്രികാലങ്ങളിൽ ഞാൻ ഉറങ്ങിക്കിടക്കുന്ന അമ്മയുടെ ആശ്ലേഷത്തിൽനിന്ന് സ്വന്തം ശരീരത്തെ മോചിപ്പിച്ച് എത്രയോ തവണ ജനലിലേക്ക് ഓടിയിട്ടുണ്ട് - പുത്തനിൽക്കുന്ന നീർമാതളം ഒരു നോക്കുകൂടി കാണുവാൻ. നിലാവിലും നേർത്ത നിലാവായി ആ ധവളിമ പാമ്പിൻകാവിൽനിന്ന് ഓരോ കാറ്റ് വീശുമ്പോഴും തിരുവാതിരക്കുളികഴിഞ്ഞ പെൺകിടാവെന്നപോലെ വിറച്ചു. (നീർമാതളം പുത്തകാലം 33).

¹⁰നീർമാതളപ്പൂക്കളുടെ സുഗന്ധം കാറ്റിൽ വന്നെത്തുന്ന എത്രയോ നേർത്ത, ഒരു ഗാനശകലം പോലെയാണ്. ചെണ്ടകൊട്ടുപോലെയുള്ളതും വീണധ്വനിപോലെയുള്ളതുമായ ഗന്ധങ്ങൾ മറ്റു ചില പുഷ്പങ്ങൾക്കുണ്ടായിരിക്കാം. ഉദാഹരണത്തിന് ചെമ്പകം. തായമ്പകപോലെയല്ലേ അതിന്റെ മണം? പനിനീർപ്പൂക്കളുടെ സുഗന്ധം വീണയെ അനുസ്മരിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. പാരിജാതം - നാലപ്പാട്ട് പടിഞ്ഞാറേ മുറ്റത്തിൽ തലയുയർത്തിപ്പിടിച്ചുനിന്ന് വെയിലും തലതാഴ്ത്തി മഴയും കൊണ്ടിരുന്ന ആ മരം പുത്തകാലം ആ പരിസരത്ത് ഒരു ഗാനം ഉയർത്തിയില്ലേ? മാത്തിലെ മുറ്റത്തെ പവിഴമല്ലി ജലതരംഗത്തിന്റെ മണിനാദങ്ങൾ ഉയർത്തിയില്ലേ? (നീർമാതളം പുത്തകാലം 33)

¹¹ എന്റെ ബാല്യകാലത്തിൽ പുന്നയൂർക്കുളത്തിന്റെ മണം അത്യന്തം ചേതോഹരമായിരുന്നു. വിളഞ്ഞുനില്ക്കുന്ന നെൽപ്പാടങ്ങൾ നെല്ലിന്റെ മാത്രം മണമല്ല പേറിയിരുന്നത്. അവ വെയിലിന്റെയും മണം പേറി. തെക്കു പടിഞ്ഞാറൻ കാറ്റ് മുളകാടുകളുടെയും, അവയിൽ ഒളിച്ചുജീവിക്കുന്ന മുർഖൻ പാമ്പുകളുടെയും കടലിലേക്ക് നീണ്ട മണൽപ്പാതയുടെ രണ്ടറ്റത്ത് വളർന്നുനിന്ന മഞ്ഞരളിപ്പൂവിന്റെയും കോളാമ്പിപ്പൂവിന്റെയും കടലിന്റെയും മുക്കുവന്മാരുടെ വലകളുടെയും ഉണക്കമത്സ്യത്തിന്റെയും ഗന്ധങ്ങൾ ഞങ്ങൾക്ക് സമ്മാനിച്ചു. വടക്കുകിഴക്കൻ കാറ്റുകൾ പുഞ്ചനെല്ലിന്റെയും ഉണക്കാനിട്ട കൊപ്രയുടെയും വെളിച്ചെണ്ണയുടെയും മണം പേറിയാണ് വന്നിരുന്നത്.

ഇനോ? മണംകൊണ്ട് പുന്നയൂർക്കുളത്തെ തിരിച്ചറിയാവുന്ന ആ കാലം പോയി. ഇന്ന് അതിന് സിമന്റിന്റെയും പെട്രോളിന്റെയും കൊതുകുകളെ കൊല്ലുവാൻ അഴുക്കുചാലുകളിൽ ഗവൺമെന്റ് ജീവനക്കാർ പീച്ചുന്ന മരുന്നിന്റെയും മണമാണ്. (നീർമാതളം പുത്തകാലം, 31-32)

¹² സാഹിത്യത്തെ സസ്യരാശിയുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതിന് ഒരർത്ഥമെ കൽപ്പിക്കേണ്ടതുളളു. മനുഷ്യബന്ധിതം മാത്രമല്ല കല. അത് കയ്യാളുന്നത് മനുഷ്യനാണെങ്കിലും സസ്യജാതിയുടെ മൃഗജാതിയുടെ സാന്നിധ്യമാണ് അതിനെ പ്രകൃതിയോട് അടുപ്പിക്കുക. (മലയാളം വാരിക 02.06.2006).

¹³ അക്കാലത്ത് മലയാളഭാഷയ്ക്ക് നമ്പ്യാരുടെ നിറവും അപകർഷതാ ബോധവുമുള്ളതായി ഞങ്ങൾക്കു തോന്നി. ഇംഗ്ലീഷ് ഭാഷയിൽ ഇംഗ്ലീഷ് കുട്ടികളെയും

തോൽപിക്കുകയെന്നതായിരുന്നു എന്റെയും ജ്യേഷ്ഠന്റെയും ലക്ഷ്യം. പലപ്പോഴും ഞങ്ങൾ ആ സംരംഭത്തിൽ വിജയികളായി (എന്റെ കഥ 16).

¹⁴ “ഒന്നിലും ആസക്തി പാടില്ല, കമലേ, എന്തിനോടെങ്കിലും സ്നേഹം കൂടി വരുമ്പോൾ മനസ്സ് നിയന്ത്രിക്കാൻ പഠിക്കണം.” (വർഷങ്ങൾക്കു മുമ്പ് 19).

¹⁵ ഓണക്കാലത്തു പൂവട്ടികളിൽ പൂക്കൾ ശേഖരിക്കാനും പൂക്കളുമൊരുക്കാനും കർക്കിടകത്തിൽ ‘ശ്രീ ഭഗവതിക്കു വെയ്ക്കു’വാനും ധർമ്മക്കാർക്ക് അരിയും നെല്ലും വാരിക്കൊടുക്കുവാനും ‘പറ’ വരുമ്പോൾ നിറപറയും പൂക്കുലയും വിളക്കും ഒരുക്കിവെയ്ക്കാനും അമ്പലത്തിൽ ചെന്നു തൊഴാനും പ്രസാദം കൈനീട്ടി വാങ്ങാനും മറ്റും ഞാൻ പഠിച്ചുവെച്ചു (എന്റെ കഥ 51).

¹⁶ പിറ്റേദിവസം രാവിലെതന്നെ ഞാൻ ആ കവിത പി. ഇ. എൻ കാരുടെ മാസികയിലേക്ക് അയച്ചു. എന്റെ ദുഃഖം തേൻതുളളികളായി കടലാസിൽ ഇറ്റിറ്റു വീണു. എന്റെ ദുഃഖം കറുത്ത മേഘപടലങ്ങളെപ്പോലെ അന്നുമുതൽ മാസികകളിലൂടെ ഏടുകളിൽ പറന്നു നടന്നു. (എന്റെ കഥ 78.)

¹⁷ വർണവിവേചനത്തിന്റെ ക്രൗര്യം ആ സ്കൂളിൽവെച്ചാണ് എനിക്ക് ആദ്യമായി അനുഭവപ്പെട്ടതും. സ്വർണ്ണത്തലമുടിയും വെളുത്ത തൊലിയുമുള്ള കുട്ടികളെ എടുത്തുമടിയിൽ വെക്കുകയും അവരെ ചുംബിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തിരുന്ന അധ്യാപികമാർ ഒരിക്കലേങ്കിലും എന്നെ അടുത്തേക്കു വിളിക്കുകയോ തൊടുകയോ ഉണ്ടായില്ല (എന്റെ കഥ 42).

¹⁸ ഇനി എന്റെ സ്വന്തം കഥ പറഞ്ഞു തരാം. വ്യവസ്ഥയോട് എതിർത്തും പിന്നീട് അവിവസ്ഥയോട് എതിർത്തും അവസാനിക്കുന്ന ഒരു തുച്ഛജീവിതത്തിന്റെ കഥ (എന്റെ കഥ 13).

¹⁹“ഇവള് ചോപ്പ് നെറത്തിലുള്ള കുപ്പായൊന്നും ഇടാൻ പാടില്ല (. . .). വസ്ത്രധാരണത്തിലും പെരുമാറ്റത്തിലും കോൺസ്പിക്കുവസ് ആവുന്നത് സംസാകാരമില്ലാത്തവരാണ്.” (വർഷങ്ങൾക്കുമുമ്പ് 44).

²⁰“നീ ശുദ്ധ കൺട്രിയായിരിക്കുന്നു. ” അച്ഛൻ പറഞ്ഞു. “യൂദ്ധാക്കെ അവസാനിച്ചെന്ന് അറിയില്ലേ. ഇനി ഞാൻ നെനെ കൽക്കത്തയ്ക്ക് കൊണ്ടുപോകാം. . . അവടെ നല്ലൊരു സ്കൂളിൽ ചേർത്ത് മിടുക്കത്തിയാക്കാം - എപ്പഴും നെന്റെ അമ്മമ്മടെ കൂടെ താമസിച്ചാ നീയൊരു കൺട്രിയാവും. അതേനിക്ക് ഇഷ്ടമല്ല. നീ പരിഷ്കാരിയാവണം. ആരോടും ധൈര്യമായിട്ട് സംസാരിക്കാൻ പഠിക്കണം. ഒരിക്കലും നെനെക്ക് ഒരു ഇൻഫീരിയോറിറ്റി കോംപ്ലക്സ് പാടില്ല. ബാക്കിള്ളൊരേക്കാൾ വലു ആളാ നീയെന്ന് എപ്പഴും ഓർമ്മണ്ടാവണം. നീയെന്റെ മകളാ. അത് ഒരിക്കലും മറക്കരുത്.” (വർഷങ്ങൾക്കു മുമ്പ് 44) സ്കൂളിലെ അധ്യാപികമാരെയും വരച്ച വരയിൽ നിർത്തുവാൻ ചങ്കുറ്റമുള്ള ഒരു പെൺകുട്ടിയാണ് ഞാൻ എന്ന് ക്രമേണ എന്റെ വീട്ടിലെ പരിചാരകർ വിശ്വസിച്ചു തുടങ്ങി (നീർമാതളം പുത്തകാലം 197).

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The Bard who sings of Love and Life

A Sociolinguistic Reading

Kamala. K. "The bard who sings of love and life...A Sociolinguistic Study of Kamala Das's Works " Thesis. Department of English , University of Calicut, 2006

Chapter V

The Bard who sings of Love and Life

A Sociolinguistic Reading

Women writers have always aroused hostility

Virginia Woolf

The central concern of chapter IV has been how Kamala Das incorporates certain sociolinguistic ideas in to her major prose works. Chapter IV has examined in detail the relevant works of the author wherein sociolinguistic elements lie scattered throughout. Chapter V is a continuation of the study of Kamala Das from the sociolinguistic perspective. Language of the author correlated to extra linguistic factors forms another important area in the field. Gender and age are the main correlates under consideration here.

Age and language are very closely connected and sociolinguists have come up with valuable observations regarding language changes that can come over a person as he or she lets go of years. Such a study is quite relevant and essential here because Kamala Das is a writer who began writing when she was hardly out of her teens and continues to write prolifically even after five decades of productive creative life. It is a matter of great satisfaction to any Keralite that Kamala Das is still the much sought after writer. This chapter also attempts to look for gender related language peculiarities in the author, if any, and if so, whether it adheres to the commonly known notions

regarding woman's language. This chapter begins with a redefinition of the concept of linguistic identity leading to an assessment of Kamala Das's identity as revealed through her works.

Language and identity

It is a matter of common knowledge that when a person speaks he reveals his identity i.e. who he is, where he grew up, his position in life, the age group he belongs to and the like. But it is a debatable point whether it is done inevitably or deliberately, whether the determining factor is destiny or choice. Very often it is observed that many people possess multiple identities- they shift from one dialect to another or from one accent to another easily. They can slip in to alternating roles effortlessly; observing such people brings one to the conclusion that linguistic identity is not an inescapable fate imposed upon people; but to a certain extent it is a social construct or a matter of choice. Coulmas is of the opinion, "Identity is a multi-layered dynamic process rather than an inborn trait that cannot be helped. Identities are partly given and partly made" (The Study. . .178).

In the early phase of sociolinguistic growth, although language variation had been accepted, the social factors to which it was tied - social class, sex, age and ethnicity - were treated as fixed categories that never changed. Variation in language was viewed as subjected to such factors and also considered as permanent properties of speakers. Each variety of language

was seen as encoding speaker identities based on the membership of certain social categories. It is in the latter decades of the twentieth century that a different approach to speaker identity developed and this inspired sociolinguistic research along different lines.

Schiffrin who has made in-depth study of the topic concludes thus, “Identity is neither categorical nor fixed: we may act more or less middle class, more or less female and so on, depending on what we are doing and with whom” (199). Present day sociolinguistics views a speaker’s identity as a dynamic, variable factor perpetually reconstructed by its users and not categorically given.

Once the dynamic view of the speaker’s identity is accepted, many number of questions follow it like what motivates it and how and what are the different ways in which different speakers exploit the mechanisms of linguistic identity display strategically. Much of sociolinguistic research in the recent decades has been devoted to various layers and aspects of identity i.e., regional, national, social class, gender and many such factors. As Coulmas argues:

These identities are not mutually exclusive but form a complex fabric of intersecting affiliation, commitments, convictions, and emotional bonds such that each individual is a member of various overlapping groups with varying degrees of

incorporation. Each individual's memberships and identities are variable, changing in intensity by context and overtime. (179)

In fact, every speech act is an identity and any research of the topic need to take in to account a good number of utterances made by a speaker. Sociolinguists believe that any product of imagination can be employed for purposes of identification. Madhavikkutty's stories and poems need to be scanned to identify the speaker behind them. All readers and critics who have gone through her works are of the unanimous opinion that, in spite of the seeming inconsistencies in them she emerges as a woman of a single identity. A casual reader or a highly critical reader – none can overlook the singer of love in them, one who sings of 'eternal love' and has made 'love' her religion. The poetess who sings of the familiar environment and all that she comes across around her has endeared herself to readers outside her land also, for she sings of universal love. This is how P.P. Raveendran introduces her poetry, "Her obsession with love, or more appropriately with intimacy, which critics without exception have identified as the most prominent feature of her poetry, is often described as evidence of an ahistorical temper"(ix).

A quick search of her poems reveals the same concern for love, which, according to her, should be the ultimate motive of life. The poem "A Request" sums up her purpose in life as the incessant search for love:

When I die
 Do not throw
 The meat and bones away
 But pile them up
 And let them tell
 By their smell
 What life was worth
 On this earth
 What love was worth
 In the end. (The Best of Kamala Das 61)
 In another poem "My father's Death", she adds:
 He was generous with his money, as generous as
 I was with my love (BKD124)

Kamala turns nostalgic and overwhelmed with sentiments as memories
 of her Nalappat house and her grandmother surge upon her.

You cannot believe, darling
 Can you, that I lived in such a house and
 Was proud and loved, I who have lost
 My way and beg now at stranger's doors
 To receive love, at least in small change? (BKD21).

In “A Hot Noon in Malabar”,

Yes, this is

a noon for wild men, wild thoughts, wild love. (BKD18)

In the poem “Love”, Kamala surrenders herself totally before her loved one:

Now that I love you,

curled like an old mongrel

my life lies, content

in you...(35)

In “ Suicide”, she adds,

I want to be loved

And

If love is not to be had,

I want to be dead, just dead

In the introduction to MKS, M. Rajeev Kumar says thus:

For this story teller love is weakness and strength at the same time. Each of her stories is the search of the artist for love. Men and women of all ages search for love. But even when she comes to know that lovelessness is the cause of marital dissatisfaction; she does not simply throw the blame on anyone.¹ (8)

The early stories like “Puzha veendum ozhuki” “Ammu”, “Smaranakal” and “Orudivasamravile” attest the unusual craftsmanship of the budding artist. It is surprising to notice the very young author, in her early 20s itself exhibiting such profound knowledge of human mind in its different stages. The teenaged girl, the middle-aged mother, and the older grandmother, all of them are living characters that she drew with deft strokes of her hand. The men and women in her early stories are basically simple souls, village folk not familiar with the complexities of life or its dangerous depths. They all know the value of love and are ever eager to nurture it. The young woman in “Mahimile Veedu” says:

Marriage is not the invitation card sent by the parents or the vows taken by the couple while ritualistically going round the lighted lamp and the bushel of paddy or the memories of a kiss. It is a state of mind. The unity enjoyed by the two people, the love and the trust that binds them.² (trans.MKS 101)

‘Ammu’ in the story of the same name is a young wife who retains her simplicity and purity of heart in any situation in life and thereby gains an edge over the townsfolk who are easily swept off the ground lured by the quick pleasures of life.

“Rugminikkoru Pavakkutty”, one of the most known stories of Madhavikkutty, is based on the life of prostitutes and the intricacies

surrounding brothels. The author touches upon the psychology of sex workers, the customers who visit them for various reasons, and the much-misunderstood elderly women who run the brothels. She is compassionate to all of them and tenderly understands each one of them whereas most stories on this theme produce only quite disgusting feelings in the minds of the readers. Lakshmi Bai, the chief of the brothel has the same perspective of life as the author and tells one of her customers, "There is nothing like love". Lakshmi Bai is quite happy to think that she can get one of the young girls of the lot married to her own son whom she expects to return to her at any moment. The story "Sonagachi" relates to prostitution; but here again the author takes the readers to the deeper layers of man- woman relationship. After spending much money on the prostitute, the young man realises that he cannot look at the girl in lust. He likes being in her company as that of a childhood friend or perhaps it is an even more tender relationship. Even a random reading of her literary works brings out Kamala's commitment to propagate the value of love. Beneath the seeming variety of her themes, this theme of 'love' remains uniform revealing the identity of speaker behind them.

Language and Age

Age related study of speech or written language forms one of the important areas coming under sociolinguistics; a sociolinguistic study of this

sort necessarily has to consider an examination of the author's language at various stages of her life. Sociolinguists see distinguishing features in a person's language in childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age. Such a study is very apt in the case of Kamala Das because she is a person who ventured out in to the world of creativity at a very young period in life and writes with vigour even in her seventies. When her stories were published for the first time she was in her early twenties or hardly a mature woman. The stories written by her in the very early stages reveal the same sort of insight and wisdom and unusual grasp of the recesses of the human mind as those she writes now at an advanced age.

Scanning the literary canvas of Madhavikkutty spread over a period of five decades, it strikes even a casual reader that glorification of love, whether between parents and children, husband and wife, lovers, friends, men and animals and living and non living objects around, has been her most consistent theme and pervading obsession. The story "Orusnehathinte Katha" (1956) "Neypayasam" (1962), "Koladu"(1969), "Kuttikkattile Nari"(1975), "Chaliyathi kunjuvum Makanum"(1987), "Avasishtangal" (1992)," Puthiya oramma"(1990), "Jadha"(1999), to name only a few pieces, all of them provide insights in to the depths of the human mind and highlight the need to love and be loved. A close reading of her literary works produces a refreshing effect on the readers- Madhavikkutty's mind and language have not undergone the kind of ageing that usually comes over the mediocre and the

down-to-earth categories of people. Despite the more than seven decades of her life and the creative span of half a century, she refuses to age, as her characters and stories attest. Her themes, reaching every nook and corner of the human mind and highlighting the need to keep it ever fresh and undefiled by mundane hardships, find not much of a deviation over the years and the same thing can be said about her language also.

The general style of her stories is that they begin casually; but the first sentence itself raises curiosity and questions in the minds of the readers. The casual statement at the beginning of the story immediately reveals a little bit of the past and throws a hint about the imminent happenings. A look in to the representative works mentioned here shows the similarity in the language of her very early works and the recent ones. The first sentence of each story catches the reader's attention and points to a very important moment in the life of the main characters.

"It was while returning after tying the cow in the cattle shed that the mute one saw the guest."³ (Oru Snehathinte Katha (1956) MKS 111-16)

"As the plane in which he had got in took off from the ground, the sun was rising." (Thanuppe (1966) MKS 466-69)

"That day also Alexander was late in returning from the office." (Kuttikkattile Nair (1975) MKS 611-18)

“It was only last year that I decided to put an end to my stay in big cities and permanently settle in Kerala. (Palayanam (1989) MKS 777-82)

“He parked the car on the left side of the street. He held his wife by hand and led her out of the car through the door on the same side.”(Puthiya Oramma (1990) MKS 818-25)

In all these stories the narrator is the author herself who takes the point of view of one character or more. The moment where the story begins becomes a significant one in the minds of the readers. Quite often there is a tea party, reunion, or a striking piece of conversation, which becomes instrumental in taking the author in to the depths of human life and its myriad manifestations. It is her usual technique to merge the past and the future in to the present covering a few minutes that become significant for the characters as well as the readers. She creates great intensity of feelings within a story that generally covers a very brief period of time. In the story “Neypayagam” the father of the story returns home at night after burying his wife’s body. She died of a heart attack and their three sons are still unaware of this. He feeds the children with the ghee pudding she had prepared for them and in the mean time endless thoughts of the past and the future surge upon his mind and the poor father’s sorrow and helplessness begin to haunt the readers. The man and the woman in the story have no names; they are just ‘father’ and ‘mother’, every father and mother who live in the hope of a prosperous future for their

children. Many aspects of life are compressed in to this short story, which covers incidents of a short duration. Another feature common to her language is to end the stories on a metaphorical expression beautiful in itself and having underlying layers of meaning. It is worth having a look at how the above-mentioned stories end.

“Darkness had set in. The mute one saw a star brightening over the lemon plant. He showed it to her.”⁴(Orusnehathinte Katha (1956)MKS111-116).

“Just as the draining of blood and the coming of death, our evening spent together will end too.” (Thanuppe (1966) MKS466-69)

“‘Definitely.’ The jackal whispered. The moon was shining outside.” (Kuttikkattile Nari(1975) MKS 611-18)

“I ran forward like an eagle ready to fly. At that moment I saw through the corner of my right eye the sun rising.”(Palayanam(1989) MKS 777-82)

“The tired and hungry turkey fowl started bickering and complaining aloud, standing beneath the bread fruit tree near the kitchen.” (Puthiya oramma (1990) MKS 818-25)

A series of images lie scattered throughout the poems and stories of Kamala Das. Her vocabulary is limited but her imagery is powerful and to a great extent responsible for the emotional effect that her works produce on the

readers. In most of her stories, it can be observed that she makes use of symbols and imagery drawn from nature. The most frequently occurring image in Kamala's writings is the sun. She uses the image of the sun with its varying hues at different times of the day to depict different moods of man and woman and their mental conditions. Though she uses the image of the sun frequently, it has not been given a systematic symbolism. To cite a few examples:⁵

Ravi! What a perfect name it is! Ravi; The sun! It doesn't need descriptions, adjectives! The sun that gives heat and life doesn't need any words of description. (Raviyude Katha MKS 263)

The evening sun fell on his eyes like gold dust (MKS262)

The plane in which you were flying. I raised my eyes and looked at the sky. The sun had turned the sky in to a fireball. [...] After sometime, only the sun remained in my eyes. (Sooryan MKS313)

I saw the street had frozen under the silver light of the sun [...] I remember the sun on that day; I remember the folds of his eyes...(Chaturangam MKS345)

The economist aid, "What is the light of man?" "The sun."(Verumoru Lahari Padardham MKS417)

Mostly, the sun stands for hope and intense desires, especially 'love', in her works. But as in the story "Chaturangam" the pale sun or its white light stands for the frozen condition or dejection. In the story, "Prabhatathinte Rahasyam" the sun stands for everything positive. The very sight of the rising sun in the story turns to be an eye-opener for the man who approached the young girl with evil intentions. The bright sun or the element of divinity behind it clears the man's mind of all evil passions and makes him a transformed person.

In the poem "Sepia", the sun is presented as a destructive force contrary to the presentation as a benevolent force in many other works. She writes:

It's time to hold anger

Like a living sun

And scorch,

Scorch to the very marrow

This sad-mouthed human

Race (SC24)

In the poem "In love", she equates the 'burning sun' with the 'burning mouth' of the man in love (SC14). In SC, one of her most famous poems, the image of the sun creates a very sensuous effect and the sensuality evoked through the image arrests the attention of the readers. The poem reads as given below:

What is this drink but
 The April sun, squeezed
 Like an orange in
 My glass? I sip the
 Fire, I drink and drink
 Again, I am drunk,
 Yes, but on the gold
 Of suns

Some other images to be mentioned in this context are: darkness, cold, the moon, the sea, the sky, the bird, the rain, the star etc. She mentions in many of her stories a wild tree that grows in height everyday. The 'fig tree' in the story "Vakkeelammavan" has a message of love. The families mentioned in the story have seen "branches of the tree" but not the 'tree' in its fullness. They are people who experience dissatisfaction in life and are on the lookout for love and emotional stability. "The gulmohar tree that burns the sides of the sky", (Pattangal MKS220-27), "The marigold bloom and the wild red bougainvillea" (The wild bougainvillea SC14-15), "The neermathalam tree carrying bunches of buttercoloured flowers" (Neermathalathinte Pookkal MKS153-59) all relate to the intense emotions or the gentler emotions of the human mind.

Colours also forms part of her poetic world. Red, yellow, blue and green colours as used by Madhavikkutty form a language of its own, creating an endless array of meanings. If 'yellow' represents death or decay, 'red', her favourite colour highlights strong man-woman relationships. If 'blue' takes the readers in to an unreal world, green is the colour of rebirth and hope. Kamala Das's skill in the use of images is unparalleled and produces in the minds of the readers the effect of seeing beautiful pictures drawn on a canvas. The study of this topic is very elaborate in its dimensions and goes beyond the scope and limit of this thesis. What is intended here is a brief search of her works looking for any noticeable changes in language and perspectives over the years. This researcher has not been able to come across any such major changes.

Trying to trace Madhavikkutty's language over the years, it becomes evident that she exhibits hardly any change worth noticing. The beginning of the stories, their end, the themes made use of, the nature of the symbols used in them and the like have not undergone any change over the years. The element of dejection and the imperfection of the stories of the later years, which some critics notice in her works are, in fact, not part of her declining creativity or age related. The welcome note to death and dejection and stories that lack perfection are found in her early creative period also. Such things are, in fact, sporadic and part of creativity and not to be mentioned as part of

ageing. Kamala Das is determined to write till her last breath and as she herself comments about it:

The writer as he goes on writing, comes to notice his friends becoming foes and also that his path is a deserted one. But such things are not to be taken seriously. Writing is a kind of penance, sacrifice intended for the future generations. It is meant not for the present generation; but for those who might live in future. The writer creates a background for their thoughts and doings. That is the heritage he contributes to them.⁶ (MKS 9)

M.T Vasudevan Nair, the veteran writer of Kerala pays tribute to Madhavikkutty in the following words: “Madhavikkutty opens out her mind in life and writings. She has made use of areas of life usually untouched by others as tools in writing. I wish I could write like Kamala Surayya.”(Malayala Manorama Daily 26 July 2006)

Language and Gender

The traditional concept of the Indian female is a pure woman, subjected to much suffering but bears her lot patiently for the peace of the family. Sex role stereotyping which begins at a very tender age continues throughout life. Creative literature as well as the media has mostly helped to

sustain such an image of the Indian woman. A general survey of school textbooks and, media programmes and the like give a true picture of the prevalent social setup – women and girls are associated with certain roles, behaviour and products.

Language as a social phenomenon is closely related to social attitudes. Men and women are socially different in the sense that society lays down different social roles for them and expects different patterns of behaviour from them. Language is only a reflection of this social fact. The gender-specific differences between speech styles are indicative of how far a society has advanced in the direction of the common goal of non-discrimination. The greater the differences are, the greater is the inequality and discrimination. Specific case studies of linguistic features of various languages which differentiate men's and women's language use indicate that there are differing preferences for lexical items, syntactic constructions, discourse strategies and performance features such as sending out back channel signals and interrupting each other. So also, studies show gender-preferential lexical choices as well as differences in the average number of words per sentence. Generally women's sentences are found to be larger. Women tend to adopt indirect strategies for expressing disagreement, followed by accounts and explanations while men express disagreement more directly and with fewer mitigating remarks.

Many studies have shown men to push women off the conversational floor, taking longer turns and even interrupting the woman in the middle of her talk. Fishman has observed that women bear a disproportionate share of the maintenance work in criss-cross conversations, helping men develop their topics through providing encouraging responses, asking questions, and listening. But men generally do not help their female conversational partners.

B.Sreedevi who has made a study of female speech and its peculiarities tries to look in to the subject of the controversy regarding Madhavikkutty and some of her works. She views it thus:

Language is evolved in man's way, the feminists complain. Though the experiences are different for the two sexes, women writers used to adopt the male point of view. A change is seen in Western literature from Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir. In Malayalam Prof. Sugatha Kumari and Madhavikkutty (Kamala Das) are considered as the torch – bearers of feminism. Between the two writers, the former is described as a feminist in the feminine way and the latter as a feminist in the 'masculine' (stronger/fiercer) way. [---]. Going through the book one cannot ignore the effervescence of 'I' and 'My'. Is the 'first person' an index of 'pride' and similar to the

use of 'imperatives' as an index of the 'assertive tone' in man's language? (77)

It remains to examine how far Madhavikkutty's language is feminine based on the widely accepted parameters of female language. Predominant features of the vocabulary need to be examined in addition to her thematic selections. As she reveals to P.P.Raveendran:

I do not view women's liberation like the westerners. Western feminism strongly advocates anti-male attitudes. But a person like me, who loves her husband and children, cannot hate man. I have derived much happiness out of man's presence. Most of the feminists whom I met in foreign countries are lesbians. I experimented whether I could be a lesbian but I failed in the attempt. I am telling you the truth. It is my character to experiment everything. We should give up any faith, politics or religion, if it does not have a moral base to it. (162)

Such is Madhavikkutty's faith; she believes in the ultimate good in man and woman and does not detest either sex. She urges man all along to recognise woman with all her strength and weakness and instigates woman to assert her intellectuality and talents, and at the same time profusely loving husband and children. Her stories amply illustrate the qualities of love and

honesty, which she expects from mankind, especially woman who, she believes, has a great role to play in life.

Madhavikkutty is a feminist in the sense that through her stories she becomes a mouthpiece of the deprived woman, the lonely woman, the helpless woman, and the neglected woman. But she is not a hard-core feminist who wants to estrange woman from man or make her fight incessantly with man.

O.K.Johny's introduction to MS reads as follows:

Madhavikkutty's works are the self-imprint of her genius, which remains eternally turbulent, and luminant by a rare insight of man, nature, God, grass and worm. The rarity of perception makes her works and life a scriptless language appearing formidable to the Malayalee mind. But scriptless language and silent emotions and thoughts never go unread by others. There aren't many imaginative writers who have shown as much enthusiasm as Madhavikkutty in re-writing our age-old notions of woman, womanliness, man and the universe.⁷ (3)

Madhavikkutty's stories, almost all of them are exceptional in the sense that they reflect an angle of vision of woman and man hardly ever noticed by most others. Probably, it is not fair to say that she has noticed what

others do not generally notice; on the other hand it is more sensible observation that she has dared to say aloud, plain truths about the human psyche and its multifarious dimensions. She is vociferous when she suggests that the silent woman, the sacrificing mother too is a thinking creature and possesses a heart that feels insult and belittlement. She too has got the cravings of the mind and the body and her confinement within the walls built by man is an unjust act intended to ameliorate man's material conditions.

In fact Madhavikkutty started writing imaginative literature long before new ideas about feminism began to spread in our country. She gained popular attention immediately too. What gained her immediate attention was her revolutionary ideas regarding the false morality practiced in the society. Madhavikkutty's concept of love is such that it elevates her stories and characters to an unusual level of beauty. The kind of beauty, which she weaves out of her sincerity to life often, mars the generally accepted moral values held by the common lot. In Stories like "Suryan", "Tharissunilam", "Swathanthrajeevikal", "Rathriyil", etc, these two seem to be in mutual conflict- the elements of beauty and morality. But she is not ready to make any compromise as far as her concept of morality is concerned. Both the stories take the readers to a level of intense love outside marriage, not usually highlighted by writers obsessed by a sense of morality. But Madhavikkutty's artistic talents are not crippled by man-made laws; on the other hand it is natural laws of the universe or cravings of the mind and the body that find

expression in her works. One cannot simply pretend not to notice the element of honesty that characterizes her stories, which recognize the fact that the body and the mind are not separate entities. As she confesses in the poem “Suicide”,

Bereft of soul

My body shall be bare.

Bereft of body

My soul shall be bare.

She never uses the high-flown tone of the revolutionary who wants to see sudden changes. Her words are gentle; her characters are likable ones who can be analysed at various levels. The forty-three year old mother who has spent her entire life for the sake of her husband and sons feels strongly disheartened when her elder son comments that her face reminds him of a goat. Madhavikkutty, in this story “Kolad” brings to popular attention neglected womanhood that is instrumental in making the stream of life flow uninterruptedly.

Madhavikkutty’s language becomes highly metaphorical when it comes to exposing the subtleties of woman’s mind:

“Mom!” my son’s sweet, sweet call. Now I think that my children’s childhood moved in much haste. In the pride of my youth, I mistook their love to be unchanging as this earth. [---]. The mother, left behind on this bank of

the river has become a forgotten woman. Yes, the mother has become just the past. I am not a mere symbol of the past. I carry out many of the duties of the housewife with the efficiency of a machine. When the setting sun spreads its saffron colour in the sky, when the 'kanikkonna' (yellow coloured flowers in bunches considered auspicious to look at) blooms in the garden, when the cat gives birth to its young ones behind the stair-case, I shed tears to think that my children are not with me to see these sights. Many years after I reach the other world, my children might come there and then we can tell stories and laugh as in the past. The other world is a place where time has no borders, and love knows no end. [---]. My son, this is not the face that you loved in the past. This is the face of a lonely old woman. The face of a poor mother who has admitted defeat.⁸ (DK127-28)

The fact that a person who eternally sings of love is being subjected to much stone throwing remains a matter of much concern and naturally arouses the curiosity of anyone. Sally Mc Connell-Ginet who throws insight in to how gender affects language production comes up with relevant material in this connection. She believes:

There might be no connection at all between agent's sex or gender and patterns of language produced but significant interactions between forms produced and sex or gender of the audience. Production patterns might show systematic

dependence on the sex/gender relations between agents and their audience, e.g. same-sex versus cross-sex situations of language use, or the Yana data reported in Sapir 1929 in which what mattered was whether or not the group was male only. (79)

She adds that production patterns might show dependence on other features that make gender important in particular situations of language use, e.g. a friend of hers has reported that a Japanese woman can use a relatively low level of so-called 'feminine' speech markers when speaking to a male class mate about their studies but much higher level when talking with that same class mate at a party. To a great extent, agents are responsible for what is produced. But the common tendency is to view the study of linguistic production as the study of speakers. The reason is attributed to the practice of explaining language production as a form of behaviour related to intrinsic properties of the person-e.g. his grammatical knowledge or intellectual capabilities- without reference to contextual factors, which are really very important.

Madhavikkutty is not the type of woman who treads the common path or the trodden path just for the sake of conforming to established rules or ways of life. She is not the one to make compromises to keep a very polished exterior or public image. She flaunts all commonly accepted canons of morality and gives her own reasons for the same. She argues in Ente Katha:

I have my own reasons to neglect and scoff what is usually considered in our midst as 'morality'. The basis of so-called morality is the decaying human body. The mind should be the basis of true morality. I view the society and its false morality as ugly monsters. Morality is the slaughterhouse built by society, the false grandmother. At night, this grandmother protects under her woolen all those who fear truth, tell lies, cheat, abort their fetuses, laugh falsely and shed false tears. Those who search for truth and know that the body is mortal and petty and have enlightened minds are left out by this grandmother from her protection and they shiver in the cold. Seeing this, society the grand mother laughs aloud.⁹ (107)

Madhavikkutty argues in "Nagnasareerangal" that "common people do not like the women of genius who stand out from the lot". She has realized and dared to say aloud what the world expects from a woman:

Dress in sarees, be girl

Be wife they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,

Be a quarreler with servants. Fit in. Oh,

Belong, cried the categorizers. Don't sit

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

Still, be Madhavikkutty. It is time to

Choose a name, a role. Don't play pretending games. (SC63)

In fact, the term feminism is one that has been subjected to varied interpretations; atleast for some the feminist is a woman who argues full throatedly for the rights of woman only, irrespective of the reality around. In such a sense the term is a mismatch for Kamala because as her works prove she is a humanist who believes that mutual understanding and recognition among human beings can make this world a heaven. Moreover her woman characters do not think in terms of their rights only; they are the best examples as embodiments of motherly qualities too. Stories like “Smaranakal”, “Oru Divasam Ravile”, “Neypayasam”, “Nunakal”, “Kuttiyum Achanum”, “Puthiya Oramma”, and “Chaliyathi Kunjuvum Makanaum” highlight motherhood and maternal qualities either by showing the abundance or lack of it in the woman characters. So also, very strong ties can be seen to exist between women and their grand children in many stories. Stories like “PuzhaVeendumOzhuki”, “Rathriyil”, “Ammu”, “Smaranakal”, “Velayudhante Bharya” etc touch upon the tender side of husband-wife relationship. In *My Story* and a few short stories like “Tharissunilangal”, “Sooryan”, “Rathriyil”, “Swathantrajeevikal” etc she makes a search in to love outside matrimony, which probably has made her the target of brutal attack by some unthinking readers and critics. But she never emerges as an advocate of unrestrained sexuality. For her, sex within marriage is also a

sin if the couples are not united by true love and emotional understanding. One of her characters confesses' "In my husband's embrace, I became a prostitute again and again. After all a prostitute is one who surrenders to another person for food and clothes." (Radhayude Katha)

Kamala strongly denies the element of 'femaleness' that critics attribute to her language. But through out her works, it can be observed that she makes use of language to suit her own purposes; she does not create a new language but the traditional symbols and myths acquire dimensions and depths that provoke serious thinking. She believes that a wide gap exists between the traditional concept of woman that emerges through literature and the reality concerning her mind and emotions. The mythical representation of Indian woman commonly found in literature as either the embodiment of all virtues or of evils only gets shattered in Kamala's works. She, who knows that every woman is an individual having her own thoughts, emotions and sentiments, breaks the age-old myth of the submissive wife.

I shall some day leave, leave the cocoon

You built around me with morning tea

Love words flung from doorways and of course

Your tired lust. I shall some day take

Wings fly around, as often petals,

Do when free in air... (I shall Some Day OP48)

In these lines she breaks the existing myth of the happy wife secure in the protection provided by the husband. Usages like 'leaving the cocoon', and 'flying like petals' take on manifestations of strength and freedom unlike their earlier associations of losing the security. In these lines Kamala makes use of language to demolish the existing myth of the blissful and secure marital life enjoyed by women irrespective of their incompatibility with their husbands.

Motherhood is state which she believes should be viewed anew; mother and children should be good friends and life-long support for one another. Idealised motherhood, which implies that the mother has clear-cut roles in the life of the growing children, catering to their needs but no significant role afterwards, is another aspect of life that she demythifies through her short stories.

Kamala is such a great writer who believes in telling aloud what many others feel reluctant to tell fearing the society and its false values. She has often been condemned by man for declaring that women also have minds and bodies and desires just like men have them.

Regarding the topic of the 'female' in her writings, Kamala's own opinion seem to be the best and the authentic rather than that of her readers or critics. Excerpts from Arshad Batheri's interview with Kamala given as introduction to her latest novel *Vandikkalalakal* are given below as the researcher finds it very appropriate in the context of such a topic.

Question:

“Is it feminism that Madhavikkutty is supporting?”

Answer:

No, never. I do not believe in ‘isms’. I have my own ‘isms’ to live with. I do not believe that in life or writings there are ‘isms’ or male-female writing. I have said that already. [...]. Then, I have found men to be better friends than women. I have introduced many good men in this novel. Is it true feminism that people here talk about? Feminism is not tearing men apart. Woman has to prove that she is capable of thinking and action.

Question:

For so long through your writings, you have created ‘love’ as a multi coloured garden and ‘sex’ as indefinable scent. Every time you did that, you had been laughed at and made fun of. Now you have come again with the most beautiful moments of love and eros. Why did you write such a novel as *Vandikkalakaal*?

Answer:

Many words have not come from the side of women in literature. Many do not say it aloud as to how women think. Trying to be truthful, they reveal only the two outermost layers of the sea. Women are like that. That’s not enough. Man should know what a woman is. He should understand about her love and sex. [...]. Life is beautiful. Love and sex forms its honey.

Madhavikkutty is only giving shape to it in new Colours and new atmosphere through the novel *Vandikkalaka*.

Conclusion

Kamala. K. “The bard who sings of love and life...A Sociolinguistic Study of Kamala Das's Works ” Thesis. Department of English , University of Calicut, 2006

Conclusion

In this thesis the researcher has attempted to study the language of Kamala Das based on the 'social' aspects contained in it. There are many ways in which society acts upon language and language acts upon society. Since the 'social' forms the foundation on which this thesis has been developed, the first part of it invariably had to be a somewhat detailed study of 'Sociolinguistics', the branch of Linguistics that has made tremendous strides in the second half of the twentieth century all over the world. The first task carried out in this thesis has been to dovetail the two seemingly disparate elements or parts of the topic taken up for the study i.e. linguistics and literature. The researcher has come to the conclusion that they do not stand apart; on the other hand they move together.

The first stumbling block on the path of sociolinguistic study is unfamiliar terms related to sociolinguistics and certain theories propounded by researchers who have gone ahead and made their mark. So the second and third chapters have of necessity become a foray in to the beginnings, growth and branching out of the subject in to the everyday life of man. The researcher concludes that since every utterance of man has its basis in the society around him, it is impossible to detach the two. Just like speech, written language also carries traces of the society along with it. It is this realization that has led to

the essential inclusion of the 'social' aspect of language as part of language study overriding the one time held notion of language as an independent entity.

After familiarizing with the basic concepts and principles of sociolinguistic study, the researcher has moved into the topic of the research: a sociolinguistic study of Kamala Das, the woman writer of Kerala who has enriched the literary world of Kerala and a good section of the reading public all over the world with her compositions belonging to genres like poetry, short story and novel.

After having made a study of Kamala Das's prose works this researcher has observed how they form a record of the social set up of Kerala of her childhood days. As the author records in her *Diarikkurippukal*:

Only the 'nairs' of the higher category (kiriyyath nairs) were allowed inside our kitchens. They were vegetarians like the 'brahmins'. The nairs belonging to the other categories could enter the rooms at the southern most and northern most parts of the house. (thekkini and vadakkini). The 'thiyyas' could come close to the house but were not allowed to enter the threshold. They could stand touching the pillars of the house and talk. The 'vettuvass' had to stand at the borderline of the courtyard and the outlying land. The 'pulayas' and other lower classes could not

come beyond the temporary wall at a distance from the courtyard. But they were allowed to call aloud, standing there. But the 'nayadis' (the lowest class of the untouchables) had to stand on the other side of the paddy field and hiding themselves behind coconut trees had to beg aloud for a little food. (108-109)

Kamala remembers that the tone of the nayadi's request almost verged on a sob; he was crushed by inferiority complex. She remembers how the tone and dialect of each caste differed and how it contributed to their poor self-esteem and social standing. The rebel and the reformer in Kamala writes, "Now they have turned in to human beings having self-respect. The bad times when man feared man has come to an end". (DK109-10)

Kamala Das's books do reveal how language as a social phenomenon is tied up with the social structure and value systems of the society. Different dialects and accents had different social relevance and they were intimately related to the power relationships that existed in the society of those days. How language served as a tool for the upper castes to maintain the gap between them and the lower castes and how language was one of the handicaps for the under privileged to talk with confidence or to talk to others on equal terms- the author has dealt with such themes very honestly and in vivid terms.

Kamala's proficiency in two languages (bilingualism) and how it has helped her to appeal to different sections of people all over the world is another topic touched upon in the fourth chapter. The researcher's observation is that her inborn flair for languages, changing circumstances under which she had to live, and the need to make herself understood by the readers of metros and villages and monolinguals made her write in both languages equally well.

Kamala Das's prose works, especially her memoirs and *DK* are a record of the family set up of the nair community of Kerala in the first few decades of the twentieth century. She has very well brought to light the practices of various sorts prevalent among the community to which she belonged.

No writer can afford to totally ignore the environment around him or her; but how far of it is reflected in the writings is a matter of individual disposition and choice. Any language contains within it aspects of the physical and social environment that nurtured it. Such features include terms of address related to kinship, friendship etc, aspects of social hierarchy maintained by subtleties of language, the flora and fauna of the place for the description of which each language has its own system. Chapter IV of the thesis has made a study of the theories of Basil Bernstein regarding the language of the privileged and under privileged schoolchildren of Britain and how it has been found applicable in the hierarchized society of Kamala's

days. The uneducated ones and the people who lacked prestige and power did follow a kind of 'restricted code' of the sort Bernstein mentioned in his studies. The socialization process undergone by the young Kamala was such that she learned to follow the 'elaborated code' of the privileged; but her innate social sense, poetic sensibility and flair for different types of dialects urged her to keep company with all categories of people around her.

Kamala was so fond of flowers, plants, trees, birds and animals around her and the unusual identification she made with them has infused her language with their smell and Colours. When it comes to the matter of the flora and fauna around her, not only her poetic sensibilities are aroused but also she turns in to a botanist who can identify each plant around her. She categorizes not only the plant world around her; her books reflect upon the kinship systems and terminology practised among the 'nair' community of those days. The way she touches upon taboo words and expressions for the sake of maintaining honesty in her words and also since she wants to do away with certain existing false notions regarding love and sex she lets loose her imagination and comes out with true facts which many people do not say for fear of the society.

The next chapter, chapter v is an examination of the author's works to see whether there is anything gender specific about it or whether it shows marked differences as she advances in age. This researcher has not been able

to trace any features in her language eligible to be called typically female. She has kept her identity throughout her productive period, of a very creative woman, honest to herself, sensitive to the world around and fearless in her words. She is ageless and belongs to all ages. The septuagenarian writes in one of her recent poems:

I shall die, I know

But only when I tire of love;

Tire of life and laughter.

Then fling me in to a pit

Six feet by two,

Do not bother to leave

Any epitaph for me. (The Hindu 13 August 2006).

. Kamala Das is a much-explored writer of Kerala; but much remains to be seen yet or seen anew. She is very much in the vortex of the social life of Kerala with her intelligent and fearless comments on every matter that comes to her notice. Her name frequently appears in some daily newspaper or weekly as a rebel who wants all rotten systems to go away.

Notes

¹സ്നേഹം ഈ കഥാകാരിക്ക് ഒരു ശക്തിയും ദൗർബ്ബല്യവുമാണ്. സ്നേഹം നേഷിതായ കലാകാരിയുടെ അന്വേഷണമാണ് അവരെഴുതിയ ഓരോ കഥകളും. എല്ലാ പ്രായത്തിലുമുള്ള സ്ത്രീ പുരുഷന്മാരും സ്നേഹം അന്വേഷിക്കുന്നു. അസംതൃപ്തമായ ദാമ്പത്യത്തിന് കാരണം സ്നേഹശൂന്യതയാണെന്നു കണ്ടെത്തുമ്പോൾ പോലും കുറ്റം ആരുടേമേലും ചാരുനില്ല. (മാധവിക്കുട്ടിയുടെ കഥകൾ സമ്പൂർണ്ണം 8).

²വിവാഹം, രക്ഷിതാക്കന്മാർ അച്ചടിച്ചയയ്ക്കുന്ന ക്ഷണക്കത്തോ, ഒരു വിളക്കിന്റെയും ഒരു പറനെല്ലിന്റെയും ചുറ്റും വയ്ക്കുന്ന പ്രദക്ഷിണമോ, ഒരു ചുംബനത്തിന്റെ സ്മരണയോ ഒന്നുമല്ല. അതു മനസ്സിന്റെ ഒരു നിലയാണ്, രണ്ടാളുകൾ തമ്മിലുള്ള ഐക്യം, തമ്മിലുള്ള സ്നേഹം, വിശ്വാസം. (മാധവിക്കുട്ടിയുടെ കഥകൾ സമ്പൂർണ്ണം 101)

³“പയ്യിനെ തൊഴുത്തിൽക്കൊണ്ടുപോയി കെട്ടി വരുമ്പോഴാണ് വിരുന്നുകാരനെ പൊട്ടൻ കണ്ടത്.” (മാധവിക്കുട്ടിയുടെ കഥകൾ സമ്പൂർണ്ണം 111-16)

“അന്ന് അദ്ദേഹം കയറിയ വിമാനം നിലത്തുനിന്ന് ഉയർന്നപ്പോൾ സൂര്യൻ ഉദിക്കുകയായിരുന്നു.” (466-68)

അന്നും അലക്സാണ്ടർ ഓഫീസിൽ നിന്നു മടങ്ങുവാൻ വൈകി. (611-18)

വൻനഗരികളിലുള്ള ജീവിതം മതിയാക്കി കേരളത്തിൽ താമസമാക്കുവാൻ ഞാൻ തീരുമാനിച്ചതു കഴിഞ്ഞ വർഷം മാത്രമായിരുന്നു. (777-82).

അയാൾ നിരത്തിന്റെ ഇടത്തെ വശത്തുതന്റെ കാർ ഒതുക്കി നിർത്തി. എന്നിട്ട് അതേവശത്തെ വാതിലിലൂടെ തന്റെ ഭാര്യയെ കൈപിടിച്ചു കാരിൽനിന്ന് പുറത്തേക്കു നയിച്ചു. (818-25)

⁴ഇരുട്ടായിക്കിഴിഞ്ഞിരുന്നു. നാരകമരത്തിനു മുകളിൽ ഒരു നക്ഷത്രം തെളിയുന്നതു പൊട്ടൻ കണ്ടു. അവൻ അത് അവൾക്കു കാണിച്ചു കൊടുത്തു. (മാധവിക്കുട്ടിയുടെ കഥകൾ സമ്പൂർണ്ണം 111-16)

രക്തം ഒഴികിയൊഴുകിത്തീരുന്നതുപോലെ, മരണം വന്നെത്തുന്നതുപോലെ, ഞങ്ങളുടെ ആ സന്ധ്യയുടെ അവസാനവും വന്നെത്തും . . . (466-69).

“തീർച്ചയായും” നരി മന്ത്രിച്ചു. പുറത്തു ചന്ദ്രൻ ജ്വലിച്ചുകൊണ്ടിരുന്നു. (611-18)

പറക്കാൻ തയ്യാറെടുക്കുന്ന ഒരു പരുത്തിനെപ്പോലെ, ഞാൻ മുന്നോട്ട് ഓടി. സൂര്യൻ ഉദിക്കുന്നത് ആ നിമിഷത്തിൽ ഞാൻ എന്റെ വലത്തെ കൺകോണിലൂടെ കണ്ടു. (777-82)

കുശിനിക്കടുത്തു വളർന്നു നിന്നിരുന്ന ബിലാത്തിപിലാവിന്റെ ചുവട്ടിൽനിന്നു വിശന്നു വലഞ്ഞ തൂർക്കിക്കോഴികൾ ഉച്ചത്തിൽ ആവലാതിപ്പെട്ടു. (818-25).

⁵രവി! എത്ര പരിപൂർണ്ണമായ ഒരു നാമമാണ് അത്! രവി, സൂര്യൻ! അതിന് വർണ്ണനകൾ ആവശ്യമില്ല, പൊടിപ്പുകൾ ആവശ്യമില്ല, ചുടും ജീവനും തരുന്ന സൂര്യന് വർണ്ണനാപദങ്ങൾ ആവശ്യമില്ലല്ലോ (രവിയുടെ കഥ, മാധവിക്കുട്ടിയുടെ കഥകൾ സമ്പൂർണ്ണം 263)

വൈകുന്നേരത്തെ സൂര്യൻ സ്വർണ്ണപ്പൊടിപോലെ അയാളുടെ കണ്ണുകളിൽ
വീണുകൊണ്ടിരുന്നു . (262)

നിന്റെ വിമാനം - ഞാൻ കണ്ണുകൾ ഉയർത്തി ആകാശത്തേക്കു നോക്കി. സൂര്യൻ
ആകാശത്തെ ഒരു തീച്ചുളയാക്കി മാറ്റിയിരുന്നു. (. . .) കുറച്ചു
കഴിഞ്ഞപ്പോൾ എന്റെ കണ്ണിൽ സൂര്യൻ മാത്രമായി. (313)

തെരുവ് രാവിലത്തെ സൂര്യന്റെ വെള്ളിവെളിച്ചത്തിൽ തരിച്ചു കിടക്കുന്നതു ഞാൻ
കണ്ടു. (. . .) ഞാൻ അന്നത്തെ സൂര്യനെ ഓർക്കുന്നു; അദ്ദേഹത്തിന്റെ
കണ്ണുകൾക്കിടയിലുള്ള ചുളിവുകളെ ഓർക്കുന്നു . . . (345)

ധനശാസ്ത്രവിദഗ്ദ്ധൻ പറഞ്ഞു: മനുഷ്യന്റെ വെളിച്ചമെന്താണ്? സൂര്യൻ. (417)

⁶ എഴുതിയെഴുതി വരുമ്പോൾ മിത്രങ്ങൾ ശത്രുക്കളാവുന്നുവെന്നും താൻ
സഞ്ചരിക്കുന്ന പാത വിജനമായ നിരത്താണെന്നും എഴുത്തുകാരനു
മനസ്സിലായിത്തുടങ്ങും. പക്ഷേ ഇതൊന്നും സാരമാക്കാനില്ല. എഴുത്ത് ഒരു
വ്രതമാണ്, ഒരു യജ്ഞം. എഴുതുന്നത് ഇപ്പോൾ ജീവിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നവർക്ക്
വേണ്ടിയല്ല. ഭാവിയിൽ ജീവിക്കാനിടയുള്ളവർക്കു വേണ്ടിയാണ്. അവരുടെ
വിചാരങ്ങൾക്കും ചെയ്തികൾക്കും പശ്ചാത്തലം നിർമ്മിക്കുകയാണ്
എഴുത്തുകാരൻ ചെയ്യുന്നത്. അവർക്ക് അവൻ കൊടുക്കുന്ന പൈതൃകം
അതാണ്. (MKS 9)

എഴുത്തിലും ജീവിതത്തിലും എല്ലാം തുറന്നു പറയുന്ന മനസ്സാണ്
മാധവിക്കുട്ടിയുടേത്. മറ്റാരും സ്പർശിക്കാത്ത മേഖലകൾപോലും അവർ

എഴുത്തിന് ഉപകരണമാക്കി. കമലാസുരയ്യയെപ്പോലെ എഴുതാൻ കഴിഞ്ഞിരുന്നുവെങ്കിൽ എന്നു ഞാൻ ആശിച്ചുപോകുന്നു. (Malayala Manorama 26 July 2006).

⁷മനുഷ്യനെക്കുറിച്ചും പ്രകൃതിയെക്കുറിച്ചും ഈശ്വരനെക്കുറിച്ചും പൂജിക്കുന്നതും പുഴുവിനെക്കുറിച്ചുമുള്ള സവിശേഷദർശനത്താൽ സദാവിക്ഷുബ്ധവും സദാപ്രകാശിതവുമായ ഒരു പ്രതിഭയുടെ ആത്മമുദ്രകളാണ് മാധവിക്കുട്ടിയുടെ രചനകൾ. ദർശന സവിശേഷതയാൽ മലയാളി മനസ്സിന് ഇനിയും വായിക്കുവാനാവാത്ത ലിപിയില്ലാത്ത മറ്റുഭാഷയാണ് മിക്കപ്പോഴും ഈ എഴുത്തുകാരിയുടെ എഴുത്തും ജീവിതവും. ലിപികളില്ലാത്ത ഭാഷകളും നിശ്ശബ്ദങ്ങളായ വികാരവിചാരങ്ങളും പക്ഷേ, ആരാലും വായിക്കപ്പെടാതെ പോവുന്നില്ല. സ്ത്രീ, സ്ത്രീത്വം, മനുഷ്യൻ, പ്രപഞ്ചം എന്നിവയെ സംബന്ധിച്ച അഗാധബോധത്താൽ, നമ്മുടെ പരമ്പരാഗത ജീവിതധാരണകളെ തിരുത്തിയെഴുതുവാൻ മാധവിക്കുട്ടിയോളം ആർജ്ജവം കാണിച്ച കല്പിത കഥാരചയിതാക്കൾ അപൂർവ്വമാണ് (അവതാരിക, മാധവിക്കുട്ടിയുടെ സ്ത്രീകൾ 3).

⁸അവന്റെ മധുരമധുരമായ വിളി: 'അമ്മേ!' മക്കളുടെ ബാല്യകാലം വേണ്ടതിലധികം ധൃതിയോടെ നീങ്ങിപ്പോയെന്ന് എനിക്ക് ഇപ്പോൾ തോന്നുന്നു. അവരുടെ സ്നേഹം ഈ ഭൂമിപോലെ സ്ഥിരമാണെന്ന് അന്ന് യൗവനദശയുടെ അഹങ്കാരത്താൽ ഞാൻ തെറ്റിദ്ധരിച്ചു (. . .). മാസങ്ങൾ ചെല്ലുന്തോറും കാലമെന്ന നദിയുടെ ഇക്കരയിൽത്തന്നെ അവശേഷിച്ച അമ്മ വിസ്മരിക്കപ്പെട്ടവളായി. അതെ, അമ്മ ഭൂതകാലം മാത്രമായി, ഞാൻ

ഭൂതകാലത്തിന്റെ പ്രതീകം മാത്രമല്ല. ഞാൻ മക്കളാൽ മറക്കപ്പെട്ടാലും ഇന്നും ചൈതന്യത്തോടെ ജീവിതം തുടരുന്നു. ഒരു കുടുംബിനിയുടെ പല പല കടമകളും ഒരു യന്ത്രത്തിന്റെ വൈദഗ്ദ്ധ്യത്തോടെ ചെയ്തു തീർക്കുന്നു. ആകാശത്തിൽ അസ്തമയസൂര്യൻ കൂങ്കുമച്ചുവി പരത്തിയാൽ, തോട്ടത്തിൽ കണിക്കൊന്ന പുത്താൽ, പൂച്ച കോണിച്ചുവട്ടിൽ പ്രസവിച്ചാൽ, മക്കളിലല്ലോ ഈ കാഴ്ചകൾ കാണുവാൻ എന്നു വിചാരിച്ച് ഞാൻ കണ്ണുനീർ വീഴ്ത്തുന്നു. മക്കളുമായി ഒന്നിച്ച് അനുഭവിച്ച ആനന്ദാനുഭൂതികൾ ഇനിയെന്നും ഞാൻ തനിച്ച് നേരിടണമെന്നോ?

ഞാൻ പരലോകത്തിൽ ചെന്നെത്തി കുറെയേറെ വർഷങ്ങൾ കഴിയുമ്പോൾ എന്റെ മക്കളും അവിടെ എത്തുമായിരിക്കാം. അന്ന് പണ്ടത്തെപ്പോലെ നമുക്ക് ഒന്നിച്ച് കഥകൾ പറഞ്ഞുചിരിക്കാം. സമയത്തിനു വരമ്പുകളില്ലാത്ത ലോകമാണല്ലോ പരലോകം. സ്നേഹത്തിന് അവസാനവും ആ ലോകത്തിൽ ഉണ്ടാവുകയില്ല (. . .) നീ പണ്ട് സ്നേഹിച്ചിരുന്ന മുഖമല്ലേ ഇത്. ഇത് ഏകാകിനിയായ ഒരു വൃദ്ധയുടെ മുഖമാത്രമാണ്. പരാജയം സമ്മതിച്ചു കഴിഞ്ഞ ഒരമ്മയുടെ പാവം മുഖം (ഡയറിക്കുറിപ്പുകൾ 127-128).

⁹ സദാചാരമെന്നു നമ്മുടെയിടയിൽ വ്യവഹരിക്കപ്പെടുന്നതിനെ അവഗണിക്കാനും ആദരിക്കാതിരിക്കാനും ഞാൻ തീരുമാനിച്ചതിനൊരു കാരണമുണ്ട്. അതിന്റെ അസ്ഥിവാദം ചീഞ്ഞളിഞ്ഞുപോവുന്ന ശരീരമാണ്. യഥാർത്ഥ സദാചാരത്തിനാധാരം മനുഷ്യമനസ്സാവണം. സമുദായത്തെയും അതിന്റെ സദാചാരത്തെയും ഞാൻ വികൃതരൂപികളായിക്കാണുന്നു. സമുദായമെന്ന കള്ളമുത്തശ്ശി ഉണ്ടാക്കിനിർത്തിയ കശാപുശാലയാണ് സദാചാരം. സത്യത്തെ

ഭയക്കുന്നവരെയും കള്ളം പറയുന്നവരെയും ചതിക്കുന്നവരെയും
 ഗർഭമലസിക്കുന്നവരെയും കള്ളച്ചിരിപൊഴിക്കുന്നവരെയും കള്ളക്കരച്ചിൽ
 കരയുന്നവരെയും മുത്തശ്ശിയമ്മ രാത്രിയിൽ തന്റെ കരിമ്പടം കൊണ്ടു പുതപ്പിച്ച്,
 കാത്തുരക്ഷിക്കുന്നു. മനസ്സിന്റെ ചൈതന്യം അറിഞ്ഞിരിക്കുന്നവരും ശരീരത്തിന്റെ
 നശ്വരതയും നിസ്സാരതയും മനസ്സിലാക്കിയവരുമായ സത്യാന്വേഷികൾ
 കരിമ്പടത്തിന്റെ സംരക്ഷണത്തിനു പുറത്തുകിടന്ന് തണുത്തു വിറയ്ക്കുന്നു.
 സമുദായ മുത്തശ്ശി ഈ കാഴ്ച കണ്ട് പൊട്ടിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു (എന്റെ കഥ 107).

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APPENDIX

Interview with Kamala Das

Question:

Socialization is a topic that forms part of sociolinguistic study. Could you tell something about your socialization as a child in to an adult i.e. who and what were the major formative factors in your growth?

Answer:

Life in Calcutta was essentially a secluded one. I had no close friends and my father and mother were very much engaged in their work. But my father was very authoritarian by nature and he used to give instructions regarding many matters. The servants played a big role in satisfying my childish curiosity. I used to spend a long time in their company, listening to their simple talk. They used to talk a lot and I would move in their midst eager to listen to their jokes, exaggerated versions of things and the like. My maternal uncle, Nalappat Narayana Menon was a very scholarly person with a philosophic outlook and he was like a king to the other members of the household. Now and then, there would be scholarly gatherings in the house and all these might have influenced me. My mother's mother, ammamma, taught me the value of love and sacrifice and was careful to guide me along the righteous path of life. On the whole, it can be said that I was a very

curious person who absorbed like a blotting paper anything and every thing that I came by. I never turned my back to anything simply condemning it as bad or improper. I condemn only those acts of life, which are intended to spoil mankind or turn one man against another. I can pardon anything other than lovelessness. My father used to employ many servants at home and at Nalappat also the same was the situation. From them I learned how pitiable the life of the poor classes was. It was my experiences with them, which taught me to be compassionate and kind to the poor. Village life and joint family set up taught me a great many number of things not available to the city children. It doesn't mean that I condemn city life altogether. I spent many years in places like Calcutta and Bombay and those big cities have had their role to play in my socialization.

Question:

Won't it be right to say that the caste-based society of your times is very well reflected in your works and that even as a small girl you strongly disapproved of it?

Answer:

As a small girl I did not know that it was all man-made. I thought that the caste system was part of life and that it was there from the very beginning. As I grew old enough to understand things I began to resent it and say openly that casteism is an evil practice. In fact the caste system was not originally

intended to separate people in to different rungs or create enmity among people. Each caste had its own work to do and role to play in the society. It was good in its own way. But as time passed, the system took on evil manifestations and it remained strongly rooted in the Indian soil. I remember very well my childhood days when the society was very firm on observing caste based rules and none dared to break them for fear of ostracization. The *nayadis* whom I have mentioned in many of my works were the worst lot hit by the caste system. They were treated as sub humans and never allowed to come anywhere near the so-called superior castes. There were specific rules as to how near our house each sub section of the untouchable could come. Now we cannot imagine how a society can practise this sort of cruelty and discrimination. But now they are retaliating and it is something that we justly deserve. They go to foreign countries, make money, and buy our land and houses. . But as far as I am concerned I am only too happy to observe the changes taking place around us. Only if discriminations are removed we can prosper as a nation. The discrimination that we experienced in the Calcutta school was of a different sort. My brown colour and sentimental nature made me a laughing stock in front of the British children and teachers. They used to openly express their dislike and contempt for Indian children like us. I remember an incident that happened in the St. Cecilia's school where I studied as a small girl. My brother was in the same school too. It was a European school where most of the students were Europeans. Although my

brother and myself did well in studies, we were regularly made fun of by the whites. I once wrote a poem and it was read aloud in the class by the teacher in front of some guests from England. They very well enjoyed the poem and wanted to know who composed it. The teacher, to my shock, mentioned the name of an English girl and she got applause for the same. This incident deeply wounded me and shook my confidence.

Question:

In almost all your works there are narrations related to the servants of your house. Could you say about how you liked their company or what you have derived out of them?

Answer:

We had many servants in Calcutta as well as at Nalappat. They lacked the sophistication, which characterizes the higher classes, and they were human to the core. I could observe in them the different facets of life. In Calcutta, we were living in a flat; but we had separate rooms to accommodate the servants. Kunjathu, a man from Kottappadi, near Guruvayoor was one of my favourite servants at Calcutta. He had a daughter of my age and I was happy to hear from him that he loved me just like his own daughter or even more. In My Story I have mentioned all the servants whom I loved dearly. Tripura was one aged woman from Calcutta whom my father had employed to take care of us, the children of the household. NarayananNair was another

servant in whom my father had great faith and he had entrusted the responsibilities of the household with that old man. We, the children of the house fondly addressed him as 'nanana'. Sankaran, Devaki, and Valli were some of the servants at Nalappat who had great affection for me. I fondly remember Januamma who was with us at Nalappat for long. In fact, Januamma, the character on whom many of my stories are based, is a mixture of three of our servants Chirutheyamma, Paruamma, and Januamma. I still remember the servants vying with one another in taking care of me as well as my brother. They taught me the value of affection as well as concern for the downtrodden. I spent much time along with the servants and my father always disapproved of my eagerness to go to them and talk to them. But I have never regretted the fact that I craved for their presence. It is because of them that I could walk around and learn to live in close harmony with nature. They taught me the names of plants, and animals, took me to festivals and being with them was similar to studying in a big university.

Question:

As far as a sociolinguist is concerned, you are a multilingual. How did you happen to turn to English from Malayalam?

Most of my schooling took place in Calcutta of the colonial period. We studied along with British students and the teachers were mostly English speaking people. So naturally I became more fluent in English than

Malayalam. The discrimination shown to us by the English people created in me and my brother the urge to excel them in studies and gain mastery over them and talk English language very fluently. I spent much of my early life in metro cities and had to mingle with non-Malayalee people. I had no way other than write in English to appeal to such a cosmopolitan reading public. They were mostly poems, which were well received by the masses. Later, gradually, as I have mentioned in some of my works I learned more of Malayalam and began to write in that language. I found that there was a lot that I could write in Malayalam, which would not make the same effect if written in English. For example Nalappat and its surroundings, when written in English, lose its beauty and fail to make the full impact on the readers. Moreover I being a Malayalee, I thought that it was essential for me to learn Malayalam language and write a lot of things for the sake of Malayalee readers. But later, it is the Malayalees who troubled me a lot and put me to unending criticism. When readers from other countries have enjoyed my books the Malayalees keep on putting blame upon me for all their follies. They are a group of people who suppress all their feelings and are unable to enjoy life. They do it all in the name of morality. Quite often I have tried to expose their hypocrisy through my books. And they hate me the more for it. But I am least bothered about such things now.

Question:

In many of your works there are descriptions of plants and trees. You have named a large number of trees. Can you identify so many trees?

Answer:

Of course, trees and plants are very much a part of my life. Even as a small child I developed such a liking for them. My grand mother and some of the servants would take me amid them and actually touching them, tell me their names. I developed such a real liking for them that everyday I found time to go to them and talk to them. So also, I liked each and every small and big living creature in our spacious courtyard. They are living characters as far as I am concerned. I derived much consolation out of constant associations with them. It was a real great eco-system and we, the humans were just part of it all. You must have understood from my works how much of importance I gave to the 'neermathalam' tree grown in our yard. The 'neermathalam' as well as many other trees were a constant source of hope and consolation for us. So it is no wonder that I know them by name and I have included them in my writings as living characters.

Question:

Amrita Pritam has once said that the poet in her predominates the woman in her. What would you say about you in this matter?

Answer:

Basically I am a woman, a wife and a mother and now a grand mother too. Cut off from that reality there is no life for me. At the same time I cannot disregard the truth that God has created me as a woman with poetic qualities. As I have told another interviewer there are two people in me. Now I am known officially as Kamala Surayya, a Muslim woman, and a law-abiding citizen. She is confined within the four walls of the religion and man-made laws. But the poet in me, Madhavikkutty, is a free individual not afraid of anyone but flying on her wings and creating new worlds. I will keep writing till my last breath. I do believe that I have been deputed by God to write for the sake of my fellow men. I derive raw material out of everything that comes my way. I write of the very ordinary things of life and never have to go in search of material for my writings. Some times it may be a very small thing not noticed by any one else that gets shaped in to a story.

Question:

Which is the literary genre of your preference? – Poetry, short story or novel?

Answer:

Definitely it is poetry- it is the favourite medium for me. I give outlet to the innermost recesses of my mind through the medium of poetry in a very

spontaneous way. Some of my best poems were composed in the early time of my creativity. I started writing poetry as a small girl imitating my mother. I love very much some of the poems written in the early period. "Composition" is one such poem. I think that my recent poems do not rise to such a level as the earlier ones. Probably, I had better imaginative qualities at that time.

Question:

I would like to include you along with the English romantic poets. Would you agree to it?

That is up to you to decide. I have not tried to make myself belong to any particular group or movement. I write about everything that comes my way- all that is in my mind and all that I see around me in such simple language. I write about human beings and about the birds and animals and also plants and trees that are very much part of this universe. I have sympathies for all the creatures around me and I hate none. I have written a lot about the poor people who used to visit our houses and also the servants who were dependants at my mother's house. I was very fond of noticing the dialect differences that formed a part of their personality. While presenting them in the stories I have taken care to include their special dialect also. Otherwise their picture is incomplete.

Question:

In my view you are a 'bard who sings of love and life'. Love is the most predominant theme of your works. Politics, corruption, or scientific growth has not been your forte. Is it the lifelessness that you observed in life, which made you write on this theme?

Answer:

I have always observed that love gives harmony to life and that in its absence life turns in to mere cacophony. It is a pity that many people have not understood the value of true love. I dream of such a world where man is guided by love and not lust. Love has to emerge from the depths of our hearts and fill the world. I have seen both love and lovelessness and realized how empty loveless life is. I have never written anything advocating false values. I have ever considered it my duty to tell my readers of the value of love and the wonderful healing powers it has got. When I say love I don't just mean any particular category of it. I do mean all love that ennobles man. It can be love of mother for the children, it can be love between husband and wife, and it can be love between friends, lovers and the like. I believe that it is a sin to live a loveless life. It is worse than anything else in this world. If you read my stories you would understand how much of importance I give to this wonderful quality of human beings.

Question:

Much of the controversy surrounding you relates to the fictitious part of your writings. In fact, I feel that it is a kind of mystification technique that you have used in many works. You don't want to reveal the borderlines - where fact ends and fiction begins. Please comment upon it.

Answer:

"Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder." In the same way it is people who create controversy about my writings. Let them do it. If I write only plain truth or about dull facts only, it does not provide interesting reading. But I never write lies about other people with the intention of defaming them. Literary works have to reach an imaginative level.

Question:

Varshangalkumunpe is set in the form of a memory work -memories passing through the mind of a seven-year-old girl. Do you actually remember yourself as a seven year old or is it partially a recreation from the familiar environment?

Answer:

My memory is very strong. I recollected most of what happened in my house in my young days and wrote that book. All that happened at Nalappat, in my Calcutta environment, the people with whom I closely associated, the

stories told by the elderly people and others – all are very vivid in my mind and I thought if I write them down it would provide interesting reading for others. So I took up that task. In fact, when I took up one incident I found that there were a lot of memories connected with it and it prolonged like that. I still very well remember minor incidents and even what went on through my mind as a small child. Most of what I have written in those books is actual happenings, which are still fresh in my memory. May be the reason is my keen observation and genuine interest in all that happens around me.

Question:

Critics have called you as a feminist. What is the sort of feminism that you advocate in life?

Answer:

Feminism in my view is not antagonism to men. My women characters are not haters of men. I believe that men and women are complementary and should support each other. Women should be emotionally strong and know how to get along with men in the journey of life. Men should have understanding and treat women with tenderness and love. I want all families to be happy families. I cannot like women and men who are antagonistic to each other. God never devised such a universe where people are enemies. How can I hate man when I have derived so much happiness from the presence of my husband and children? But I strongly support the cause of

women-there are many women who are badly trampled upon by unfeeling men, lusty men. I talk aloud for such women. But I am not bothered about any labels or claim to belong to any movement. I am basically a lover of mankind and I believe that through my writings I can open their eyes to the fact that the world is place for you to love one another and not otherwise.

Question:

Nearly five decades have passed since the publication of your short stories and the latest one *Vandikkalaka*. I think some changes have come up over your themes as well as your language. What do you say to it?

Answer:

Naturally, changes must have come because the times have changed a lot. Now we are living in a very insecure time and I am writing about that time. Probably my views have changed too. And when you write about turbulent times more powerful language is needed too. These days I am very much worried about young girls because I do feel that they are never secure anywhere. When I see a girl traveling alone I think very much about her, whether she reaches home safely or she is troubled by somebody and the like. I do feel very angry to think that the peace of mind of people is spoiled by men who are so hard-hearted and inconsiderate. When I write about such people definitely I must use language different from the one I used for earlier times and the life in those days. Whatever I write I do it from the depth of my

heart. It was one of the greatest desires of my mind to write a story like *Vandikkalakal*. It was in my mind for a long time. I am quite familiar with many doctors since my own brothers and sister are doctors. It is such familiarity with doctors and their life style that made me choose this theme.

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