

PREFACE

To read Kamala Das' poetry as an unabashed expression of 'sensuality' and 'self-pity' has been a critical commonplace. This conventional approach, however, has indirectly instigated the urge to re-read the same poems from a different perspective with a faint hope of finding other yet-to-be-explored aspects that may help liberate this much maligned poet and give researchers newer insights and critical interest. In fact, the present study of the poetry of Kamala Das has sought to traverse the road less travelled by with the glee of freedom and discovery.

I have tried to shed some light on a sensitive poet's relentless negotiations with socio-economic issues like gender, class, ethnicity, colour, age, language, etc. on the basis of which man has exploited and marginalized his fellow beings. Within the seven chapters of the dissertation, I have also tried to see and show how Das' treatment of these and such issues in her poetry as well as in *My Story* has led to the formulation of her 'Poetics of Resistance'.

In the introductory chapter, I have tried to determine the scope of my critical enquiry by reviewing the research already done in this area, by defining the relevant terms and concepts, and by discussing a few representative poems of Kamala Das to get a lead-in to the following chapters in which various causes of 'marginalization' have been discussed in some detail. The second chapter is an attempt to pin down gender (the feminine gender) as a possible cause for marginality by showing Das' treatment of the many 'denials' and 'disadvantages' that accrue to the owners of the 'woman's frame'. The third chapter has been dedicated to analyzing Das' poetic treatment of economic disparity as a marginalizing determinant. In the fourth chapter, the divisive role of ethnicity in creating and perpetuating the centre-margin binary has been discussed with illustrations from Das' poetic oeuvre. The fifth chapter is devoted to laying bare the scourge of the dark skin that has often caused irrational prejudice, exclusionary practices, and inhuman cruelty to be perpetrated on its 'unfortunate' wearers. The inevitability of age and the wanton marginalization of the aged, as shown in and

through the poems of Kamala Das, have been discussed in the sixth chapter. In the concluding chapter, attempts have been made to reevaluate the poet's social consciousness and idealistic endeavours in order to help create a more equitable social order.

The methodology adopted in the thesis has been interpretative and interdisciplinary with recourse to critical pluralism, notwithstanding the fact that the nature of the subject warrants a dominantly sociological approach. The tools of Feminist, Marxist, New Historicist, and Postcolonial criticism have been pressed into service for supplementing wider views on the poet's work.

Of course, the present study does not claim to be a comprehensive survey of Kamala Das' poetry rather it is a selective analysis of those poems that have some bearing on and correspondence with the conceptual framework thereof.